

THE DOCTRINE OF MORTIFICATION
AND THE OPUS ALIENUM DEI
IN LUTHER AND
REPRESENTATIVE LUTHERAN THEOLOGIANS

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Title of Thesis The Doctrine Of Mortification And The Opus Alienum Dei In Luther
And Representative Lutheran Theologians

This is a study of the doctrine of mortification and the opus alienum Dei in Luther and four major Lutheran theologians: Philipp Melanchthon in the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy, Philipp Spener in Lutheran Pietism, Albrecht Ritschl in the nineteenth century, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer in contemporary theology. It has been prompted by the recovery of the doctrine of mortification in the theology of Bonhoeffer after a long period of relative neglect.

In Luther's theology mortification is effected by the opus alienum Dei. He saw the latter as the work of God's "left hand," as the dialectical counterpart of His opus proprium, the work of His "right hand." This "alien" work God effects through Anfechtung, the law, and the cross of the Christian. Anfechtung is an assault on man's faith, led by God, with the purpose of strengthening it "by fire." The second use of the law of God leads man to a knowledge of his sinfulness and his need for the forgiving grace of God. The cross of the Christian may not be chosen, but comes from God. Its essential nature is persecution in the cause of Christ. Through these God effects His "alien work" of destroying the spiritual pride and security of men in preparation for grace.

These four themes of mortification, Anfechtung, the second use of the law, and the cross of the Christian, which supply the content of Luther's doctrine of the opus alienum Dei, are then traced in the work of the theologians named.

While all the subsequent theologians, except Ritschl, had a doctrine of mortification, the conception of the opus alienum Dei was obscured and in the process of being lost as early as the work of Melanchthon. It had too much to say about Christian "experience" to be congenial to Lutheran Orthodoxy. Since Spener, whatever understanding of the opus alienum Dei has survived has been subsumed under the opus proprium Dei. In this way the dialectical relationship was lost and the opus alienum Dei as a clearly defined conception progressively obscured. Ritschl repudiated the conception altogether, for, in eighteenth and nineteenth century fashion, he did not conceive of anything in man toward which an opus alienum Dei might be directed. Bonhoeffer did not recover the conception because, as a Barthian, it was necessary for him to regard the matter "Christologically" and thus to reject an opus alienum Dei as "natural theology."

Therefore, the thesis of R. Prenter, that Lutheranism has never really been Lutheran, is considered proved in regard to the doctrine of mortification and the opus alienum Dei. The loss of the latter conception is serious, for Luther's position on these doctrines underscored the initiative and activity of God in the salvation of man. The task of mortification and the opus alienum Dei is to teach man his need for God and the gospel as preparation for the reception of grace.

The opus alienum Dei has not ceased in the modern world, however, modern man seems no longer to be the victim of the Biblical "Tyrants:" the flesh, sin, the law, the world, death, etc. On the other hand, he is no less "tyrannized" than his forebearers were. It is part of the task of contemporary theology to help him understand this modern opus alienum Dei as an opus Dei, for where this is not understood, the opus alienum Dei cannot lead to the gospel, but can only end in despair. There is then a profound and satisfying answer to the widespread despair of our time in Luther's dialectic of the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei.

PREFACE

The doctrine of mortification, with which this study deals, was formulated by St. Paul as the dying of the "old man" which must take place in preparation for and along with the birth and life of the "new man," as this is expressed, e.g. in Romans 6:6-11,¹ "our old self was crucified with Him (Christ)," and Galatians 5:24, "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh." It is the conception that the old nature of man has been destroyed in Christ's crucifixion and that the destruction of the "personal" old man must subsequently take place in those who follow Him.² There is an old man who must "die," if the new man is to "live." It is a "dying" which, to use a phrase of Luther's, "makes room" for the new man.

Our purpose here is not to study the new life or the new man as such. It is rather concerned with the following questions: what is the "dying" that must take place? Why is it necessary? Who or what is it that must die? By what means is this "dying" effected?

This theme is one which has received comparatively little attention in theological literature in recent centuries. This is all the more regrettable because it is a theme which is absolutely crucial to Christian apologetics in every age. The old man, before his mortification, has no sense of need for what the gospel offers. He is perfectly secure in his high

¹The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, New York, 1952. For all Biblical quotations except those which appear as part of directly quoted material where they are reproduced as they are given in the text quoted.

Additional note: American spelling, punctuation, and general usage have been followed throughout.

²Editor's Note, Luther's Works, Vol. 13, Eds. Pelikan, Jaroslav and Lehman, Helmut, Philadelphia and St. Louis, 1955- , footnote 32, p. 27. Hereafter abbreviated LW.

spiritual regard of himself. He is self-sufficient, without a sense of need. It is only when his false gods are destroyed that he comes to know the true God as his God. It is one of the most fundamental tasks of Christian apologetics, amid the changing conditions of human life in every generation, to help men see this mortification, this destruction of the idols of spiritual pride and security, as the handiwork of God. The apologetic proclamation of the Church today must help men understand God's work of mortification and the man which it produces, and how the gospel accompanies this work and speaks to this man as sweet "good news." Where contemporary man does not understand the need to which the gospel is addressed, Christ, and His cross, and grace itself are irrelevant to his life.

One contemporary voice which has spoken clearly and profoundly of mortification is that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This thesis may be said to have begun with a phrase of his, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."³ His The Cost Of Discipleship is a modern classic on this theme. However, to fully understand the man and his theology, it is necessary to study him in the context of his heritage. As a student of Karl Holl, it is a heritage stretching back to Luther himself.

To turn from Bonhoeffer to Luther is to change worlds, and it is also to discover in Luther a far richer doctrine of mortification than is to be found in any of the Lutheran theologians who have followed him. For the modern student this is very like the discovery of an old, buried treasure. Although raised in a Lutheran home and congregation, trained in a Lutheran

³ Nachfolge, E.T. The Cost Of Discipleship, by Fuller, R. H., Revised Edition, London, 1959, p. 79.

theological school and ordained into the Lutheran ministry, Luther's rich theology of mortification came in the nature of a discovery to the author. Why should it be virtually unknown to the modern Lutheran?

The Lundensian theologians have generally answered this question by following A. Ritschl in clearly distinguishing between the theology of Luther and that of the Lutheranism which followed him, conditioned largely by Philipp Melancthon. The Luther scholar Regin Preter, of the University of Aarhus, in one of the most profound of all Luther studies, contends that at certain points the contrast between Luther and Lutheranism is so great that one is prompted to ask which is heretical. He finds that the gulf between them is nowhere more apparent than at the point of Luther's rediscovery of the Biblical realism regarding the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei effecting mortification and vivification. This theme was lost in Lutheranism, he writes, and this is no peripheral matter, for it is a theme which stands at the very center of Luther's theology. Preter therefore concludes that "Lutheranism has not generally been Lutheran."⁴

To test this thesis of Preter's and to determine what treatment Luther's doctrine of mortification and the opus alienum Dei experienced in subsequent centuries will constitute the most important purpose of this study.

We may well come to concur with the conclusion of Philip Watson that Luther's work met with only "partial comprehension," so that

In turning to the study of Luther...we are not going

⁴Spiritus Creator, E. T. Jensen, J. M., Philadelphia, 1953, pp. 302-304.

back to a stage of history long superseded, but forward to something that has not yet been reached. It is the measure of his greatness that he has penetrated to the very heart of the deepest problem of humanity, and has given us an answer that four subsequent centuries have not mastered and made fully their own.⁵

To accomplish our purpose we must first describe and define the conceptions of mortification and the opus alienum Dei as they were formulated by Luther in his theology. Then they will be studied in the work of a significant Lutheran theologian in each of the major periods of Lutheran history which follow. We will trace the latter's fidelity to and development from the founder of their tradition. Another selection of "representative" Lutheran theologians could have been made than the one which has been made here. However those chosen have all been pivotal influences in their respective periods.

As the theology of the "father" of Lutheran Orthodoxy, the work of Philipp Melanchthon is normative for the entire period, even though development continued from his position for over a century after his death. Philipp Spener was the founder of Lutheran Pietism and thus his work is normative for any study of the movement, and all the essential characteristics of the movement, even in its later phases, are present in his work. Albrecht Ritschl was one of the most influential voices of the nineteenth century in theology. As a neo-Kantian, his work represents the direction

⁵Let God Be God!, Philadelphia, 1948, pp. 64-65.

taken in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on the subject of mortification and the opus alienum Dei. The work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, while tragically cut short by his martyrdom, is important to this study, because he was one of the few modern theologians who has dealt at length with the doctrine of mortification. His work is of further interest, because, while a Lutheran and a student of Karl Holl, he belonged to the reigning theology of the day, that of Karl Barth.

The terminal studies, because of the importance of these theological positions for the theme of this thesis, were planned to be more extensive than the three intermediate ones. No one of the five studies is intended to stand alone. The work of each of the five theologians deserves a fuller treatment than is possible within the limitations of a dissertation. The temptation to do more intensive research in any or all of the five areas had to be resisted, if the realization of the aim of the thesis as a whole was not to be needlessly delayed. However, by laying the work of these theologians side by side here, we hope to gain insights into and draw conclusions about the history of the doctrine of mortification and the opus alienum Dei from the reformation to the present day.

My deepest thanks to my advisors, Professors J. McIntyre and W.S. Tindal, for their continual guidance and encouragement. My thanks also to the staffs of the New College and Capital University Libraries for their generous assistance.

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H. W.

To
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MARTIN LUTHER

(1483-1546)

MARTIN LUTHER

Luther experienced in full measure what it means to die in order to live. The facts of his famous quest for a "gracious God"¹ are well known: how intense his struggle was, how very personal, how spread out over so many years. It was only out of the depths, out of the bitter anguish of his feeling of abandonment by God, and by a long and painful path, that he came at last to a sure conviction of God's grace. In those years his theology was born.

The years from 1507 to 1513, with their recurring spiritual conflict, religious depression, and despair of salvation, Luther described in later life as "the hell" of despair² and his "spiritual martyrdom."³ The self-accusation and self-condemnation of those years he looked back upon as "indispensable prerequisites",⁴ as the way to God and grace, for him the only way.⁵

How Luther found the answer he was looking for through all the self-torment of those years, in his struggle with Romans 1:17, is also well known.⁶ The theology which came out of this experience, Luther himself

¹Boehmer, Heinrich, Luther im Lichte der neueren Forschung, E.T. Luther And The Reformation In The Light Of Modern Research, by Potter, London, 1930, pp. 126, 59. Hereafter abbreviated Luther.

²Boehmer, Heinrich, Der junge Luther, E.T. Road To Reformation, by Doberstein and Tappert, Philadelphia, 1946, p. 312.

³Mackinnon, J., Luther And The Reformation, Vol. I, London, 1925, p. 90.

⁴Editor's Introduction, Luther's Preface To The Complete Edition Of A German Theology, 1518, LW 31, pp. 73-74. Each of Luther's works is dated the first time it appears in the footnotes. This is done as an aid to the reader, but it should be noted that many of the dates are approximate only. No attempt has been made here to deal with them critically. The dating in Luther's Works is simply reproduced.

⁵Mackinnon, pp. 165-166, 162-163.

⁶Boehmer, Road To Reformation, p. 109; see also his Luther, p. 73.

termed The Theology of the Cross. He meant the Pauline Theology of the crucified Christ, or as we might say, who though crucified is the Christ. It is the theology of the "veiled" God, the Almighty appearing in weakness and lowliness.⁷ In Luther's phrase, this is the "God hidden in suffering" and the cross.⁸ God is more deeply hidden in Christ crucified than in any other way, for man associates Him with power and majesty and not with the humiliation and suffering of the cross.⁹

The Theology of the Cross is that of the God who kills to make alive, who performs an alien work in man in order to come to His own proper work. This God breaks forth out of His hiddenness and reveals Himself in Jesus Christ, the crucified and resurrected. Before this God all righteousness of man must die, that there may be "place" for His righteousness which He gives to man. As such it is a theology which extolls the grace and glory of God.¹⁰

Luther contrasted the Theology of the Cross with the Theology of Glory, by which he meant the scholastic theology of his day. He taught that God and "the world" are so opposed because of sin, that in His encounter with it, He must come as the Hidden God who cannot be known by man's "wisdom." This God "reveals" Himself only in His opposite, sub contra specie. Thus He is "re-

⁷ von Loewenich, Walter, Luthers Theologia Crucis, III Auflage, München, 1939, p. 3; Prenter, Regin, "Luther On Word And Sacrament," More About Luther, Martin Luther Lectures, Vol. II, Decorah, Iowa, pp. 65-66; Bornkamm, Heinrich, Luthers geistige Welt, E.T. Luther's World Of Thought, by Bertram, M.H., Saint Louis, Missouri, 1958, pp. 3-4; Qanbeck, Warren, "Luther's Early Exegesis," Luther Today, Martin Luther Lectures, Vol. I, Decorah, Iowa, p. 52.

⁸ Heidelberg Disputation, 1518, LW 31, p. 53.

⁹ Watson, Philip S., Let God Be God!, London, 1947, p. 103.

¹⁰ Tr. Intro., Eduard Ellwein, Vorlesung über den Römerbrief, 1515-1516, II Auflage, München, 1928, p. x.

vealed" in the humiliation and ignominy of the cross. And the "wisdom" of man always balks at the scandalum of the cross.¹¹

The Theology of Glory does not know God hidden in suffering, therefore it prefers "works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly." It is the enemy of the cross of Christ because it prefers the glory of works. The Theology of the Cross, on the other hand, knows that God can only be found in suffering and the cross and teaches that the cross is good and that works are evil. In the cross "works are dethroned and the old Adam, who is especially edified by works, is crucified."¹²

Luther's distinction between the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei is fundamental and important. Luther found both revealed in Christ, the former in His crucifixion and the latter in His resurrection. The Christian must be "conformed" to his Lord in both. In the Christian the opus alienum is "the crucifixion of the old man and the mortification of Adam," i.e. the work of God through which the old man dies, while the opus proprium is "justification...and the vivification of the new man,"¹³ i.e. the work of God through which the new man is made alive. Both works must be performed in man. "There is a time to die and a time to live."¹⁴

Luther's theology was always a theology of the cross, although some of the emphases of his early thought later dropped into the background. The theology of the cross cannot be placed in a particular period of Luther's

¹¹ von Loewenich, op. cit., pp. 21-24, 54, 84, 92, 95.

¹² Heidelberg Disputation, LW 31, p. 53; Explanations Of The Ninety-Five Theses, 1518, Thesis 58, LW 31, p. 227.

¹³ WA I.112.37 ff., quoted in Watson, op. cit., p. 158; see also Mackinnon, pp. 166-167.

¹⁴ St. Paul's Epistle To The Galatians, 1531, Ed. P.S. Watson, London, 1953, p. 124.

thought, for it is not a "chapter" in his theology, but a "kind" of theology which belongs to the whole.¹⁵ It is the title Luther gave to his theology in the most critical years of his life, because he stood so close to the cross in his own experience. In these years he was seriously preparing for martyrdom. The moment passed and he was not martyred. In later years different emphases in his theology simply mirror the changing needs to which he wrote.¹⁶

THE GOD WHO KILLS AND WHO MAKES ALIVE¹

SOLI DEO GLORIA²

Soli Deo Gloria is a great basic chord in Luther's theology. The glory belongs to God as God,³ i.e. because only He is God and He is God alone. It cannot be given to another, certainly not to the creature.⁴ God remains God, man remains creature, and it belongs to the creature to give to Him who said, "I am the Lord thy God" the honor which is His.⁵

¹⁵ von Loewenich, pp. 7, 12, 228.

¹⁶ When it is remembered that Luther produced a treatise every fortnight for 25 years (Rupp, Gordon, The Righteousness Of God, London, 1953, p. 5.), it is not difficult to understand that he wrote to the issues at hand in the ever changing Reformation scene. His interests changed as he was confronted with new problems. Modern scholarship has concluded there is no "marked divergence" between the earlier and the later Luther. (Watson, Footnote 19, p. 28; von Loewenich, p. 107.)

¹ Deuteronomy 32:39 which Luther often quotes, e.g. Explanations Of The Ninety-Five Theses, Theses 5, LW 31, pp. 99-100.

² Many important themes in Luther's theology are necessarily referred to only in a very abbreviated fashion, in passing, as they relate to the central questions of this study.

³ Römerbrief, p. 412.

⁴ Galatians, p. 249.

⁵ Harnack, Theodosius, Luthers Theologie, Vol. I, Erlangen, 1862, pp. 125, 304; Römerbrief, Glossae 86, 12 f., footnote p. 342, also pp. 502-503; Holl, Karl, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte, Band I, Tübingen, 1921, pp. 107, 127; Psalms 51, LW 14, p. 174.

Adam's sin is that he stole the honor from God and took it for his own. This is not to let God be God, and is the greatest of all sins. God cannot endure man's having another Lord beside Him, for that would mean His ceasing to be God.⁶ When man takes upon himself the glory which belongs to God, he denies and renounces Him and sets himself in His place.⁷ It is the nature of human pride to draw as close as possible to God, "next to" or "beside" Him, i.e. to presume to be like Him and to take His place.⁸ Human pride wants to be God's master,

so that there is no poorer, more insignificant, and despised disciple on earth than God; He must be everybody's pupil, everyone wants to be His teacher.

Human pride is "always wanting to send Him back to school."⁹ Either man gives the glory to God or he takes it for his own.¹⁰

The form of expression this pride takes is that man seeks to justify himself by his own works of righteousness, i.e. to be his own justifier and to do the work of God for himself, and thus keep the glory as his own. For Luther here is the "abomination standing in the holy place," the creature set in the place of the Creator.¹¹

This is man as idolater. The idol of his heart is the righteousness

⁶Harnack, T., pp. 253-257, 303.

⁷Galatians, pp. 249-250.

⁸Sermon On The Tenth Sunday After Trinity, 1516, LW 51, p. 14. Luther was a great preacher. In the pages which follow frequent reference is made to some of his sermons. However, nowhere does the argument rest on this sermonic material. It is employed essentially to illustrate and to enrich, for there is a wealth of language here which deserves to be heard. See also R  merbrief, pp. 277, 308; Harnack, T., p. 143.

⁹The Last Sermon, Eisleben, 1546, LW 51, pp. 383-384, 387.

¹⁰Sermon On St. Thomas' Day, 1516, LW 51, p. 18; Holl, op. cit., p. 180.

¹¹Galatians, pp. 249-251.

of his works,¹² by which he would save himself. This idolatry has the effect of saying, "I am a Savior."¹³ Man takes the glory from God and gives it to his own works. He "thrusters God out of His seat, and sets himself in His place."¹⁴ Thus man either is his own savior, taking the glory for himself, or he lets God be God, i.e. his Savior, and gives Him the glory.

But God has said, "My glory I will not give to another." (Is. 48:11)¹⁵

MY POWER IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS

Unlike pride, humble faith "ascribes honor to God and sin to itself" and therefore allows God to be truly God. For this reason God has said, "My power is made perfect in weakness." (II Cor. 12:9)¹⁶ "Where man's strength begins, God's strength ends," but "where man's strength ends, God's strength begins."¹⁷ Therefore God is not a Savior of the "strong, mighty, wise, and holy." They do not need such a God. He is Savior of the "weak," the "insignificant," the "poor sinners" who need Him,¹⁸ for only in them can He be mighty and reign as God.¹⁹

For this reason, God has established a "fixed rule" that whatever is praised by men is abominable in His sight.²⁰ On the other hand, those whom the world rejects, the poor, lowly, simple-hearted, and despised, God has chosen...in order that

¹²Römerbrief, p. 384.

¹³Galatians, pp. 250, 381.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 223.

¹⁵Defense And Explanation Of All The Articles, 1521, LW 32, pp. 48-49.

¹⁶Psalms 51, LW 14, p. 174; Galatians, pp. 221, 223, 561.

¹⁷The Magnificat, 1521, LW 21, p. 340.

¹⁸Psalms 110, LW 13, p. 253.

¹⁹Galatians, pp. 367-368; Römerbrief, p. 202.

²⁰Sermon On The Man Born Blind, 1518, LW 51, pp. 36-37.

men may know that our salvation consists not in
man's power and works but in God's alone.²¹

The poles are pride and humility. As pride would set man in God's place,
humility acknowledges itself to be a creature and honors Him as God.²²

God desires the man who makes himself a sinner and unworthy, because
only in him can He effect His work of salvation.²³ It is still God's way
to create out of nothing, as in the beginning He created the universe.
Out of those who are "nothing," God makes something precious and blessed;
but those who are "something" in their own eyes and before the world, God
can only bring to nothing and destroy.²⁴

THE HIDDEN GOD

"I thank Thee, Father...that Thou has hidden these things from the
wise and understanding and revealed them to babes." (Matthew 11:25-26)
The Lord calls those babes, wrote Luther, "who count their own works as
nothing, who attribute nothing to their own wisdom, and make nothing what-
soever of themselves, but consider only God to be wise".²⁵

Man hides his own in order to conceal it, but God con-
ceals what is His own, in order to reveal it. That is
to say He hides it from the wise and the great in order
that they may be humbled and become fools and thus re-
veals it to babes; for such was His gracious will...And

²¹ The Magnificat, LW 21, pp. 314, 317, 345.

²² Sermon On The Tenth Sunday After Trinity, LW 51, p. 14; Harnack, p. 143.

²³ Vogelsang, Erich, Der Angefochtene Christus bei Luther, Arbeiten zur

²⁴ Kirchengeschichte, Berlin und Leipzig, 1932, p. 31.

Harnack, T., pp. 142-143; see also Psalm 8, LW 12, p. 112; Römerbrief,

²⁵ pp. 239, 208; The Last Sermon, Eisleben, LW 51, p. 387.
Sermon On St. Matthias' Day, 1525, LW 51, pp. 125-127.

where is there any better will than that which, because it hides itself, removes what impedes the gospel, namely, pride?²⁶

God is "hidden" for Luther in two ways that concern us here. First, His majesty is hidden in its opposite, weakness; and second, His mercy is hidden in its opposite, His wrath.

The Almighty God is hidden in weakness. Because sinful man clothes himself in glory, God draws near to man in the "strange" form of lowliness and gentleness.²⁷ Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the life and especially in the cross of Jesus Christ. Since man associates God with power, He is more deeply hidden in the humiliation and suffering of the cross than in any other way.²⁸ Because man in his pride has created a work-righteousness of his own, God has made Himself "invisible" and wishes to be recognized in suffering and the cross to condemn the pride of man. God destroys the presumption of the pride by making it impossible to recognize Him in His glory and majesty, unless man first recognizes Him in the humility and shame of the cross.²⁹

Second, God's mercy is hidden in His wrath. No one develops the concept of the wrath of God more fully than does Luther.³⁰ The reason is that he takes sin so very seriously and opposes every attempt to rationalize the wrath of God at sin away. For Luther, God is good and gracious. It is "a thousand times more His nature" to show mercy than to show wrath. However,

²⁶ Sermon On St. Matthew's Day, 1517, LW 51, p. 26.

²⁷ Psalm 8, LW 12, p. 112; Römerbrief, p. 142; Harnack, T., pp. 144-145.

²⁸ Watson, p. 103.

²⁹ Heidelberg Disputation, LW 31, pp. 52-53.

³⁰ Pinomaa, Lennart, Der Zorn Gottes in der Theologie Luthers, Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, B, XLI, Helsinki, 1938, p. 8; Holl, Third Ed., pp. 39-42, 178.

He cannot endure sin, also by nature. In one sense, God does His work of wrath contrary to His deepest nature, which is grace, and even contrary to His will. At one and the same time, God's wrath belongs to His nature, since as a God of holiness and righteousness He cannot avoid hating sin; and still His wrath is contrary to His essential nature which is that of a God of mercy and grace. Therefore God stands in a two-fold relationship to the world, a relationship of wrath over against sin and its basic form, pride; and a relationship of grace over against an humility and a faith which permits God's saving work to be done.³¹

God's love for man, because of his sin, is expressed in its opposite, in that which is contrary or opposed to man.³²

Our life is hidden in death, God's love for us in hate against us, glory in disgrace, salvation in ruin, the kingdom in a foreign land, heaven in hell, wisdom in foolishness, righteousness in sin, strength in weakness.

God's "yes" to man in grace is hidden in its negation, His wrath.³³ For as Luther wrote, what is more strange than for a Savior to destroy? It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this underlying concept of Luther's, this apparent contradiction in the nature of God, who comes in wrath and condemnation, in the very act of saving.³⁴

³¹Harnack, T., pp. 146-147, 296-297, 299, 350-351, 354, 396-397, 582-583.

³²Römerbrief, pp. 406-407, 132.

³³Ibid., pp. 330-331, 405-407.

³⁴Watson, p. 91; Rupp, pp. 146-147.

THE WRATH OF GOD

The wrath of God is always wrath against sin. Luther quoted Ps 6:1: "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy anger, nor chasten me in Thy wrath," which he interpreted, "punish me not in Thy rage, but in mercy, that Thou destroyest only the old man, but savest the new."³⁵

For the believer it is a wrath of mercy,³⁶ the "correcting" wrath of a kind Father.³⁷ It is a "breaking" of man in the "guise of destruction, which in reality is the path to new life."³⁸ As such His wrath is "the mask" under which God hides His mercy. Through it man's spirit is broken, he is humbled, his sin destroyed, and he is led to God's love.³⁹ It is a "hidden" work for the believer seems to experience nothing but wrath. He does not appear to be a product of God's work, but rather seems to be abandoned by Him. However, this work of wrath is in reality a "secret blessing", for God is "shaping and preparing" him to become a new creature. Out of the cross He creates salvation, and out of death life.⁴⁰

THE GOD WHO KILLS AND WHO MAKES ALIVE

Righteous men are God's handiwork, His new creation.⁴¹ But "strange"

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36 Römerbrief, p. 57.

Luther distinguished two kinds of wrath: ira severitatis (Zorn der Strenge) and ira misericordie (Zorn der Barmherzigkeit). The first is directed to the sin of the incorrigible, the second to the sin of the believing. Only the latter relates to the theme of this study. (See Pinomaa, pp. 73-74, 76, 78-79, 89-91, 97, 103; Harnack pp. 402, 313, 325-326) The distinction belongs to Luther's writing before 1517. In his later writings it is taken up in the opposition of love and wrath, grace and judgment. (Pinomaa, pp. 79-80)

37 Psalm 6, LW 14, p. 140.

38 Römerbrief, 409-12; Holl, p. 33.

39 Dillenberger, John, God Hidden And Revealed, Philadelphia, 1953, pp. 21-22; Harnack, T., pp. 297, 403; Pinomaa, pp. 75, 98.

40 Psalm 118, LW 14, p. 58; Psalm 111, LW 13, p. 379; Psalm 45, LW 12, p. 296.

41 Sermon On St. Thomas' Day, 1516, LW 51, p. 19.

is God's work. When He begins to justify a man, He first of all condemns him.

Him whom He wishes to raise up, He destroys; him
whom He wishes to heal, He smites; and the one to
whom He wishes to give life, He kills.

This is the God who says: "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal."
(Deuteronomy 32:39)⁴² God destroys and humbles in order to bring man to
the beginning of salvation. "This is the man to whom I will look, he that
is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My word." (Is. 66:2)⁴³

The God who kills and who makes alive is to be understood in His wrath
and in His grace. Wrath Luther named God's "strange" or "alien" work (opus
alienum); grace he named His "own" or "proper" work (opus proprium).⁴⁴ The
proper work of God is salvation, but He cannot come to His proper work un-
less He first undertakes a work that is alien and contrary to Himself. The
idea was suggested to Luther by Isaiah 28:21: "The Lord will rise up...to
do His deed ___ strange is His deed: and to work His work ___ alien is His
work."⁴⁵ God is a God of life and salvation and He prefers His own work of
mercy, but He must first do a strange work of wrath which is distasteful to
Himself. Because of sin, He must judge, kill, and destroy, i.e. He must
"kill" to "make alive."⁴⁶ To make men righteous, He must first make them

⁴² Together with this verse, quoted repeatedly by Luther in this context,
is I Sam. 2:6: "The Lord kills and brings to life; He brings down to
⁴³ Sheol and raises up."

⁴⁴ Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 5, LW 31, pp. 99-100; Römerbrief,
pp. 228, 309.

⁴⁵ Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 5, LW 31, pp. 99-100; Sermon On St.
Thomas' Day, LW 51, p. 19; see also Harnack, T., T. 146; Bornkamm, Luther's
World of Thought, p. 170.

⁴⁶ Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 58, LW 31, p. 225; Sermon On St. Tho-
mas' Day, LW 51, p. 19; Rupp, pp. 146-147.

Harnack, T., pp. 146-147, 296-297, 299, 345-351, 354, 396-397, 582-583.

sinners and unrighteous by destroying their opinion of their own righteousness, for He can make righteous only those who are not righteous. Therefore, His alien work must precede and accompany His proper work.⁴⁷

This alien work, "this humbling, this bruising and beating down" serves as an "entrance into grace." Because pride and self-righteousness will not permit a man to be a humble sinner before God, but rather glorifies than humbles him, God must bring this "vain confidence" to nothing. God will exalt only the humble, justify only sinners, save only the damned. In His opus alienum He teaches man that his strength is weakness and that instead of being righteous, he is in reality lost and damned.⁴⁸

God's opus alienum is directed toward sin, for the wrath of God is nothing other than His judgment on sin.⁴⁹ Sin was always a "religious question" for Luther, i.e. the wrong relationship to God. This wrong relationship is pride by which Luther meant man forcing himself into the presence of God with his own self-righteousness. Such an attitude not only hinders, but makes impossible God's proper work of grace. This pride accompanied by self-righteousness and unbelief is always the object of God's wrath. God does not will damnation, but salvation. However, the holy God can have communion with the sinner only in judgment and wrath.⁵⁰

The purpose of the opus alienum Dei is to "kill" in order that God may come to His proper work which is to "make alive." The wrath of God is not directed to man to destroy him, but to drive him to implore God's mercy.

⁴⁷Sermon On St. Thomas' Day, LW 51, p. 19.

⁴⁸Galatians, pp. 303-304.

⁴⁹Pinomaa, pp. 19, 48.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 70-71, 73, 96, 98, 107, 203-204.

Luther wrote that without this experience of God's wrath, man could never learn the meaning of faith.⁵¹ The believer is not saved "accidentally" or "by chance" in this way, but "necessarily." For in His opus alienum God shows that it is not on the basis of man's merit, but by Him that man is saved. Without this work, there would still be "room" in man for pride and trust that it is his own righteousness that saves him.⁵² God's purpose is good and "full of gentleness" in His alien work, for it is not for the believer's harm but for his profit.⁵³ As such it is God's "punishment of love."⁵⁴

On outward appearance it would seem that in His alien work God kills and condemns the very ones who believe in Him, but His purpose is to teach them a faith which knows that life emerges from death and that their affliction ends in salvation.

Therefore the Lord first thrusts all His own ignominiously into death, and then and there He becomes their God and Lord, who liberates them from death.

This is indeed a God of salvation...⁵⁵

He "tears down and crucifies" that in which man has pleasure and confidence to teach him he can have joy and confidence in God alone. In this way God makes man susceptible to His work, which can only take place when man's own plans and works are silenced.⁵⁶ God leads man into the depths and out of them to show him that on the side of mankind there is nothing but helplessness.

⁵¹ Psalm 118, LW 14, pp. 60-61.

⁵² R  merbrief, p. 315.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 409-412; Psalm 111, LW 13, pp. 379-380.

⁵⁴ Harnack, T., p. 403

⁵⁵ Psalm 68, LW 13, pp. 22-23; see also Psalm 90, LW 13, p. 116.

⁵⁶ R  merbrief, pp. 373-374, 306-307.

ness and despair and that everything depends on Him.⁵⁷

God's purpose is to reveal to man that he is suffering from a disease for which there is no cure in himself, and so to prepare him for the "remedy of the gospel."⁵⁸ Because man's pride hinders him from becoming a sinner in his own eyes, through His alien work God brings man to see himself as He sees him, i.e. as he really is.⁵⁹ This He does that man may cease trusting in himself and learn to grow strong in Him.⁶⁰ Therefore He must destroy the basis for man's strength in himself and at the same time teach him that it is His work to effect salvation and not man's.⁶¹

It is God's proper work to save, but there is no "room" for this work in man so long as he is intent on saving himself. Therefore God must first destroy the pride in man which is the hindrance to His grace and bring it to nothing, before He can save. Only in this way does He avoid being "robbed of His mercy." Therefore even when He leads man into the depths of despair in His wrath, it is an expression of His saving love.⁶²

Of the opus alienum Dei, Luther wrote that whenever God gives a new "degree of grace," He does so in such a way that it runs contrary to all man's intentions and plans. God employs what is "opposite" to man to break down all resistance and "persistence in self-will" in him. This He must do because it is His intention to "transform" man.⁶³ Because man desires the greatest piety in his own eyes and in the eyes of the world, and is of an

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⁵⁸Vogelsang, p. 67.

⁵⁹Watson, p. 156; see also Vogelsang, p. 63.

⁶⁰Sermon On St. Thomas' Day, LW 51, p. 19.

⁶¹Psalm 118, LW 14, pp. 60-61.

⁶²Harnack, T., p. 143; Römerbrief, pp. 343-345, 405-407, 409-412, 506-507.

⁶³Pinomaa, pp. 79, 114-117.

⁶⁴Römerbrief, pp. 405-407.

"unbroken mind," and filled with self-will, God must come in opposition to his wishes and desires. God cannot allow man to remain "unbroken" and so He "destroys," "tears out," and "scatters."⁶⁴ He "makes sick where He desires to strengthen;" He "makes anxious where He will console;" and He "kills where He will make alive."⁶⁵

Thou exaltest us when Thou humblest us, Thou makest us righteous when Thou makest us sinners. Thou ledest up to heaven when Thou castest us into hell. Thou grantest us the victory when Thou causest us to be defeated. Thou givest us life when Thou permittest us to be killed. Thou comfortest us when Thou causest us to mourn. Thou makest us to rejoice when Thou permittest us to weep. Thou makest us to sing when Thou causest us to cry. Thou makest us strong when we suffer. Thou makest us wise when Thou makest fools of us. Thou makest us rich when Thou sendest us poverty. Thou makest us masters when Thou permittest us to serve.⁶⁶

It is of His grace that God sends what goes against man, contrary to his feelings, thoughts, and wishes ____ infamy, reproach, persecution. He does it that man may not be proud.⁶⁷ It is to drive man from faith in himself to faith in God's mercy. This is its purpose, and God holds man precisely where he has fallen and lets him conquer precisely where he has been overcome.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Römerbrief, pp. 405-407.

⁶⁵ Vogelsang, p. 59.

⁶⁶ Psalm 118, LW 14, p. 95.

⁶⁷ Galatians, p. 531.

⁶⁸ Vogelsang, pp. 62-63; see also Römerbrief, pp. 306-309, 313.

To achieve the purpose of His alien work, God uses the whole of creation as an "instrument in His almighty hand." He may use pestilence, sword, hunger, illness; the wrath of men against each other; the devil, the world, and the flesh. He may use any means at hand, but always to realize His purpose, that man may learn to trust in Him alone.⁶⁹

The ways in which the opus alienum Dei takes place through Anfechtung, the law, and the cross of the Christian will occupy us below.

The opus alienum Dei leads man to feel his shame exposed for all to see. The hand of every man seems against him and the universe actively hostile. To experience the wrath of God is to feel a terrible reversal of St. Paul's great exclamation in Romans 8, "If God be against a man, who can be on his side?"⁷⁰ Man feels himself guilty of the eternal judgment of God and utterly forsaken by Him. As God's proper work is to bring men from death to life, His alien work is to destroy and to drive man from life to death.⁷¹

In this way God "makes real the sin within the heart" to teach man that righteousness can only be found in Him.⁷² Luther wrote that it is an "infallible sign" that "things are right with man" when he grieves over everything that is in himself. It is an equally sure sign that things are not right with him when he is still pleased with what he finds in himself.⁷³ For the presence of the effects of the opus alienum Dei in man are the surest sign God has received him for grace.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Pinomaa, pp. 75, 80-82, 91-92, 95.

⁷⁰ WA V.78.38, quoted in Rupp, pp. 107-108.

⁷¹ Harnack, T., pp. 316-17, 322.

⁷² Psalm 38, LW 14, p. 157; see also Sermon On St. Matthew's Day, LW 51, p. 28; Römerbrief, pp. 330-331; Psalm 6, LW 14, p. 142.

⁷³ Psalm 38, LW 14, p. 157; Römerbrief, pp. 373-374, 405-407.

⁷⁴ Harnack, T., p. 422.

When experiencing the opus alienum Dei man gropes for the mercy of God and cannot find it. He feels altogether forsaken by God.⁷⁵ But if he will reject his own righteousness, he will find that this will of God which opposes him and which he thinks to be the greatest evil of all is in reality "full of sweetness." God leads man in a way he would under no circumstances choose for himself, but in faith he discovers that it is in reality the best and most perfect way for him.⁷⁶ Only faith does not despair. Only faith does not consider God an enemy. Only it can apprehend this God who works a blessing in a curse, righteousness and life in sin and death, and consolation in suffering.⁷⁷

When man comes to understand the opus alienum Dei in faith, he sees the good intention of God behind it and what would most drive him to despair, moves him instead to trust in God.⁷⁸ Faith sees the fatherly heart behind the unfriendly exterior of the hidden God in His alien work. It sees "the sun shining through those thick, dark clouds." It calls with confidence to Him who smites it. This act of faith, writes Luther is "the skill above all skills."⁷⁹ In the words of Karl Holl,

Luther looks through the darkness and the storm of divine wrath into God's will of love, and perceives, as he so wonderfully expresses it, 'under and above the no, the deep, secret yes' that God speaks to him.⁸⁰

⁷⁵The Magnificat, LW 21, p. 341.

⁷⁶Römerbrief, pp. 405-407.

⁷⁷The Magnificat, LW 21, p. 340; Römerbrief, p. 313; Harnack, T., p. 144.

⁷⁸Römerbrief, pp. 409-412.

⁷⁹Psalm 118, LW 14, p. 59.

⁸⁰Holl, p. 59; Bornkamm, Luther's World of Thought, p. 35.

THE MAN WHO MUST DIE

It is the man of sin who must die. Luther's use of the term concupiscence is an excellent example of his putting new wine into old bottles, i.e. his continuing use of scholastic terms after filling them with a different content. Concupiscence for Luther was selfishness, self-centeredness, self-love, self-seeking, and as such rebellion against God. This selfishness he also calls idolatry because it takes the form of man setting his own righteousness up as an idol over against God. And because this idolatry focuses on man's righteousness rather than on God's righteousness, it is always also unbelief.¹

But more specifically it is the man of pride (superbia, hochmut) who must die.² It is the basic sin, for it is the denial of sin and the attempt of man to justify himself in the presence of God.³ Accompanying this pride is always security (sicherheit) in man's own righteousness.⁴

At the heart of the man who must die is an egotism⁵ that is "self-love"⁶ and the desire to "be somebody."⁷ In religious terms this egotism leads man to the doing of good works for his own salvation and his own glory.⁸ Therefore, it leads to an "imagined" and an "affected piety." The proud man wraps

¹Boehmer, Road To Reformation, p. 128; Holl, p. 108; Watson, p. 30, footnote 41; Rupp, pp. 152, 165.

²Eg. Römerbrief, p. 127; see also: "if pride would cease there would be no sin anywhere," Heidelberg Disputation, LW 31, p. 47; Holl Third Ed. pp. 34, 157.

³Pincmaa, pp. 68, 71, 96; Holl, p. 289; Rupp, pp. 147-148.

⁴Eg. Römerbrief, p. 172; see also Rupp, p. 178.

⁵Rupp, p. 141.

⁶Römerbrief, p. 233.

⁷Psalms 38, LW 14, p. 162.

⁸Psalms 143, LW 14, p. 199.

himself in righteousness and holiness, praises himself and is pleased with himself.⁹

The man of pride is secure in his own righteousness of which he is altogether aware, while he has no awareness of his sin.¹⁰ He therefore has no qualms of conscience, but considers himself pious and innocent of sin, is well satisfied with himself and has a strong sense of "well-being."¹¹ The proud "nestle down" in their security,¹² for they have hidden their sin from themselves and look only at their piety.¹³ So sure of themselves are they that they "unabashedly justify themselves" in their own eyes and, from their point of view, before God as well.¹⁴

This security is the deepest "self-complacency," "smugness," and "self-assurance."¹⁵ It is precisely this which makes this attitude so repugnant to Luther, for security is a "powerful hindrance" to the work of God in man.¹⁶ The man of pride, secure in his own righteousness, does not perceive his own wickedness,¹⁷ will not play the role of sinner,¹⁸ and will not repent.¹⁹ He denies that sin is sin²⁰ and will not permit his righteousness to be condemned.²¹ Therefore he will not cry out to God or look to Him as his Helper in need. He would rather do good works which make him secure

⁹ Sermon On The Tenth Sunday After Trinity, LW 51, p. 16; Römerbrief, p. 403.

¹⁰ Sermon On St. Thomas' Day, LW 51, pp. 20-21.

¹¹ Psalm 32, LW 14, p. 148; Psalm 6, LW 14, p. 146.

¹² Römerbrief, p. 174.

¹³ Psalm 38, LW 14, p. 161-162.

¹⁴ Psalm 32, LW 14, p. 150.

¹⁵ Psalm 90, LW 13, pp. 113, 124, 126; Psalm 6, LW 14, p. 141; Römerbrief, pp. 124, 256.

¹⁶ Römerbrief, pp. 405-407.

¹⁷ Psalm 38, LW 14, p. 167.

¹⁸ Römerbrief, p. 106.

¹⁹ Sermon On St. Thomas' Day, LW 51, pp. 19, 21.

²⁰ Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, 1537-1540, LW 22, p. 398.

²¹ Galatians, p. 225; Römerbrief, p. 384.

and give him peace, because they cover over his need for God.²²

Such a man will not become "empty," will not become "hungry," will not become a "babe"²³ whom God can fill, satisfy, and save. There is "no thirsting for grace,"²⁴ without which God's work cannot be done in man.

The greatest security is the greatest temptation...To have many temptations is no temptation (Luther often expressed this in a different way: 'No temptation is the worst temptation'); the greatest disturbance is the greatest peace; the greatest sin is the greatest righteousness...For in the former (i.e. security) the fool reposes in himself and has forgotten God, whereas in the latter (i.e. temptation, sin) the wise one forsakes himself and takes refuge in God. But to repose in oneself and forget God is the very cesspool of all evil...²⁵

It is as if, Luther wrote, a physician comes upon a patient who denies he is sick and calls the physician a fool who is more sick than himself for trying to heal an healthy man. This resistance by the patient prevents the physician from healing him. He can perform his work only when the patient admits he is sick and permits himself to be healed. This is why it is so dangerous for the man of pride in his security to maintain he is well. God cannot heal him until he admits he is sick.²⁶

²²Sermon On The Fourth Sunday After Epiphany, 1517, LW 51, pp. 25-26.

²³Sermon On St. Matthew's Day, LW 51, p. 28.

²⁴Galatians, pp. 323-324; see also Sermon On The Tenth Sunday After Trinity, LW 51, p. 16.

²⁵Sermon On The Fourth Sunday After Epiphany, LW 51, p. 24.

²⁶Römerbrief, p. 88.

The man of pride believes himself to be without faults²⁷ and accounts his works to be holy.²⁸ This Luther called "presumption of righteousness," man's high opinion of his own righteousness which can only have contempt for God's grace and mercy. It was for Luther "the universal plague of the whole world."²⁹

This presumption of his own righteousness is the basis for man's attempt to justify himself, i.e. to do the saving work of God for himself.³⁰ As Luther expressed it, he wants to hear the "gospel" from himself and not from God, i.e. he wants to pronounce himself just.³¹ He has no regard for the decision of the "Highest Judge," but wants to pronounce himself innocent.³²

However, this self-justification by works has the opposite effect from that desired. It does not in reality justify a man, but makes him a greater sinner. It does not pacify the wrath of God, but kindles it. It is the greatest hindrance to the justification of man by God.³³ It is precisely this use of good works to justify that makes them evil.³⁴ It is to set an "iron wall" between man and the grace of God.³⁵ Those who seek to justify themselves are farther from true righteousness than are the publicans and

²⁷Psalm 51, LW 12, pp. 329-330.

²⁸Galatians, p. 361; Psalm 1, LW 14, p. 305.

²⁹Galatians, pp. 298-300, 323-324.

³⁰Römerbrief, p. 308.

³¹Sermon On St. Thomas' Day, LW 51, pp. 21-22.

³²Römerbrief, p. 409; Galatians, p. 251.

³³Galatians, pp. 318-319, 562; Römerbrief, p. 130.

³⁴Sermons On The Most Interesting Doctrines Of The Gospel by Martin Luther, London, 1830, hereafter abbreviated, Sermons ML, Ser. XXIII, "Of Temptation," p. 299.

³⁵Sermon On The Man Born Blind, LW 51, pp. 42-43; see also Galatians, 332-333; Sermon On St. Matthew's Day, LW 51, pp. 28-29; Römerbrief, Glossae 109, 13 ff., footnote pp. 398-399.

sinners.³⁶

The man who "presumes" of his own righteousness does not need God.³⁷ "Men of this kind wish to be like God, sufficient in themselves, pleasing themselves, glorying in themselves, under obligation to no one." In his idolatry, this man will not take the "form of a servant," i.e. of the creature, but clings to the "form of God."³⁸ When man seeks to justify himself he renounces God whose prerogative it is to save and sets himself in His place.³⁹ This is to rob God of what is His own.⁴⁰ The soul of man ascribes to itself what belongs to God and "worships itself,"⁴¹ i.e. "the idol of his own righteousness erected in his heart."⁴² The idolatry of self-justification rests on a false conception of God and on a false relationship to the true God.⁴³

The man of pride and self-righteousness does not glorify God as "righteous alone," the Justifier of man.⁴⁴ Instead he takes the glory from God and "mocks and dishonors" Him.⁴⁵ The man of pride takes the honor from God and gives it to his own righteousness.⁴⁶ He denies God as Savior, because he has no need for a Savior.⁴⁷

³⁶Galatians, p. 451.

³⁷Psalms 143, LW 14, pp. 198-199.

³⁸Two Kinds Of Righteousness, 1519, LW 31, pp. 301, 303.

³⁹Galatians, pp. 249-250.

⁴⁰Two Kinds Of Righteousness, LW 31, p. 302; Psalms 2, LW 14, p. 348.

⁴¹Psalms 2, LW 14, p. 348; Galatians, pp. 518-519.

⁴²Sermon On The Tenth Sunday After Trinity, LW 51, p. 17; The Sermon On The Mount, 1532, LW 21, p. 270.

⁴³Watson, p. 158.

⁴⁴Römerbrief, p. 93.

⁴⁵Galatians, pp. 131-132; Psalms 2, LW 14, p. 348;

⁴⁶Heidelberg Disputation, LW 31, p. 46; see also Römerbrief, p. 177; Against The Heavenly Prophets In The Matter Of Images And Sacraments, 1525, LW 40, p. 81.

⁴⁷Römerbrief, pp. 502-503.

Only the man who denies his own righteousness and confesses himself a sinner takes the glory from himself and gives it to God to whom it belongs.⁴⁸

With this teaching Luther struck at the very heart of human nature, for nothing is so essentially contrary to that nature than for man to set aside his pride. Of himself he cannot possibly renounce his own righteousness. It is his most precious possession.

The man of pride condemns the grace of God as not sufficient for his salvation by his reliance on his own righteousness. To reject the grace of God in this way was for Luther the "very sin of sins," a blasphemy "more horrible than can be expressed."⁴⁹

Not only does such a man condemn the grace of God, but he denies Christ. He wants to be his own Christ.⁵⁰ He denies Christ as his Justifier and Redeemer and blasphemes against the "inestimable price" paid by Him on the cross.⁵¹ Christ was born, crucified, and risen again in vain for the man who trusts in his own righteousness. Under this "cloaked holiness" and trust in his own righteousness, he crucifies Christ daily in his heart.⁵²

The gospel is foolish to the man of pride. He knows a better way, self-justification. The gospel is foolish to him because it praises the works of God and thus takes the glory from man and gives it to God. This the man of pride cannot endure,⁵³ for if the gospel is true, all human merit is nullified and no works of human righteousness have any validity what-

⁴⁸Römerbrief, pp. 85, 94.

⁴⁹Galatians, pp. 180, 183, 185, 299-300.

⁵⁰Ibid., 119, 245-246, 556, 531; Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, LW 22, p. 398.

⁵¹Galatians, pp. 147, 176-177, 185.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 448, 81, 198, 454; see also Sermon On The Tenth Sunday After Trinity, LW 51, p. 16; Two Sermons Preached At Weimar, The Second Sermon, 1522, LW 51, p. 113.

⁵³Galatians, p. 174. Sermon On St. Thomas' Day, LW 51, p. 18.

ever. The man of pride who has built his life around the merit of his righteousness grumbles at a gospel that would give "for nothing" the salvation for which he has labored with such zeal.⁵⁴

One example will make this more concrete. Luther rightly saw that pride and security were among the greatest evils of his age, indeed of any age! It was no chance occurrence that the Reformation was set in motion by his outcry against indulgences. It was exactly at this point that he lay the heart of the medieval church bare. For his reaction against the indulgence was "not that it fails to solace, but that it succeeds too well."⁵⁵

The sense of security which indulgences created prevented repentance and could in no way be reconciled with Luther's conception of salvation, requiring as it does the very opposite of security, a deep awareness of sin and a deep sense of need for the grace of God. As such they led man to take sin lightly and thus prevented him from receiving forgiveness of sin and from ever truly coming to Christ. They made the gospel call to repentance ridiculous.⁵⁶ "Indulgences are rightly so-called, for to indulge means to permit, and indulgence is equivalent to impunity, permission to sin, and license to nullify the cross of Christ."⁵⁷ Therefore indulgences made impossible the very process by which a man is saved in Luther's theology, the process by which man is made humble and sinful, so that God can exalt and save him.⁵⁸

The man of pride and security resists the work of God in him. He re-

⁵⁴Römerbrief, pp. 378-380.

⁵⁵Rupp, p. 115; See also Bornkamm, Luther's World Of Thought, pp. 45-50.

⁵⁶Boehmer, Road To Reformation, pp. 176-179.

⁵⁷Sermon On St. Matthew's Day, LW 51, p. 31.

⁵⁸Vogelsang, p. 38.

sists God's chastisement,⁵⁹ denies that sin is sin,⁶⁰ and refuses to be regarded as unrighteous.⁶¹ He is hostile to the gospel because it takes that very righteousness away upon which his security rests.⁶²

Because only God can justify and because the righteousness of man is the greatest hindrance to His work of salvation, this righteousness of man must be destroyed. "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled." (Matt. 23: 12)⁶³ It is the man of pride who must die.

THE OPUS ALIENUM DEI:

A. MORTIFICATION

Luther clearly taught that man cannot come to eternal life until he is born again.¹ The man who must die Luther called the "old man," "born of Adam."² "It is necessary to peel off the old skin and the old birth, and to put on the new."³ Man must pass from the "birth of sin," birth after the flesh, to the "birth of righteousness," spiritual birth.⁴

There is no question that Luther normally associated this rebirth with the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. It is in baptism that man is reborn from

⁵⁹Psalm 111, LW 13, pp. 379-380.

⁶⁰Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, LW 22, p. 398.

⁶¹Römerbrief, p. 198.

⁶²Two Sermons Preached At Weimar, The Second Sermon, LW 51, p. 112; Galatians, p. 80; Römerbrief, p. 322.

⁶³Römerbrief, pp. 378-380.

¹Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, LW 22, pp. 277-278, 287.

²Römerbrief, pp. 232-233; see also pp. 274, 354.

³Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, LW 22, pp. 281, 303.

⁴Ibid., pp. 288-289, 291; Rupp, p. 336.

sin to righteousness and from death to life.⁵ Baptism is a "washing and regeneration" which brings man a new birth and transforms him into a new person.⁶ Becoming "new persons," "newborn creatures" is a matter of water and the Holy Spirit.⁷

At the same time, however, Luther unequivocally stated that the killing of the old Adam in man and the resurrection of the new man both continue man's life-long.⁸ At baptism the Christian undertakes the destroying of the old man in himself throughout his life.⁹ In commenting on Romans 6:4: "We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death," Luther wrote that while man is baptized into death, this "dying" is not immediately completed. In baptism man has only taken the first step. Baptism was ordained that man might be led into this death and through it to life.¹⁰

Man has become new by God's grace in baptism, but the flesh remains and must be crucified.¹¹ Luther wrote that the Scripture uses "unmistakable terms" in commanding "the putting to death of what is earthly."¹²

⁵Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, LW 22, pp. 287, 303. See the excellent statement on this point, Prenter's "Luther On Word And Sacrament," pp. 81-99.

⁶Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, LW 22, pp. 284, 286.

⁷Ibid. p. 287; Galatians, pp. 563-564.

⁸In the Small Catechism Luther asked the question, "What does such baptizing with water signify?" His answer reads,

It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

⁹The Book Of Concord, St. Louis, Missouri, 1922, p. 162.

¹⁰Boehmer, Road To Reformation, p. 323.

¹¹Römerbrief, pp. 231-232.

¹²Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, LW 22, pp. 178-179; Letter To The Princes Of Saxony Concerning The Rebellious Spirit, LW 40, p. 81.

¹²Against Latomus, 1521, LW 32, p. 207.

It must be resisted and "nailed to the cross."¹³

The opus alienum Dei effects mortification. As we have noted above, Luther used the term for the Pauline conception of the "crucifixion of the old man" (e.g. Rom. 6:6-11; Gal. 5:24): the idea that the old man has been destroyed in Christ's crucifixion and that this must lead to the destruction of the "personal" old man in those who follow Him.

It is God's work throughout, this "putting to death of the old man."¹⁴ It is a work the Christian "endures" from God and does not do himself. It is a work of "destruction" God must do because there is that in man which needs "shaping," if he is to become a new creature. It is God's "chastisement" for the ultimate good of the Christian.¹⁵

Thus mortification as the crucifixion and putting to death of the old man is effected by the opus alienum Dei, just as justification and the vivification of the new man are effects of the opus proprium Dei.¹⁶

Mortification as the work of God cannot be self-chosen.¹⁷ Where a "self-chosen putting to death of the flesh" is sought only a "new monkery" can be

¹³Galatians, p. 527.

¹⁴Psalm 111, LW 13, p. 378.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 379-380.

¹⁶Psalm 2, LW 14, p. 318; Harnack, T., p. 346; see also Watson, p. 158.

¹⁷Luther also speaks of a mortification of self-discipline, i.e. of "works," (Against The Heavenly Prophets, LW 40, p. 83; The Freedom Of A Christian, LW 31, p. 358) e.g. "fasting, prayer, and alms." (Explanations Of The 95 Theses, LW 31, pp. 85-87) Earlier Luther considers "cathartic asceticism" indispensable, later he requires only "gymnastic asceticism," i.e. he increasingly departs from the ideals of monasticism. From the beginning, however, the cross of the Christian, or unmerited suffering, is always more highly regarded by him as a means of mortification than any "acts" of mortification. (Boehmer, Luther, pp. 77-78) Evidence for this is his repeated emphasis that the means of mortification must not be self-chosen. Undoubtedly this emphasis is so marked because he feared a return to the monastic ideals of self-perfection and salvation by works of righteousness.

achieved.¹⁸ This is not to accept what God gives, but to choose for oneself the means of mortification.¹⁹ The difference between Luther's concept of mortification and that of monasticism lies precisely at this point. For Luther mortification can never be chosen, is never meritorious, is never a "work." His Theology of the Cross is unalterably opposed to all moralism.²⁰

Mortification that is chosen becomes a "meritorious work" so easily, by which man hopes to make satisfaction for his sins and to procure the favor of God. As such it becomes like all the works of monasticism, "abominable before God." An example of Luther's makes the application concrete. He writes, in regard to fasting, Christ was led by the Spirit into the wilderness

lest that any taking upon him to fast of his own mind, and for his own profit sake, should in vain endeavor to follow the example of Christ; for he must look for the leading up of the Spirit, He will cause fasting and temptation enough; for he that without the leading of the Spirit should voluntarily bring himself into danger of hunger, or any other temptation, when by the blessing of God he hath what to eat and drink, and whereby to live quietly, he, I say, should plainly tempt the Lord.²¹

Those who "punish themselves" and "afflict themselves" in doing "many hard and great works" of mortification Luther called the "devil's martyrs."²²

¹⁸Against The Heavenly Prophets, LW 40, p. 81.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 83, 117; The Sermon On The Mount, LW 21, pp. 267-268.

²⁰Von Loewenich, p. 163; Holl, Third Ed., p. 229.

²¹Sermons ML, Ser XXIII, "Of Temptation," pp. 299-300.

²²Galatians, p. 446.

Mortification dare never be made a human work, performed as an "atone-
ment for sin."²³ Luther wrote he "crucified Christ daily in his monkish
life," because his works of mortification led to a trust in his own holi-
ness.²⁴ Asceticism is not "the way that leads to heaven." Only Christ is
that.²⁵

After grace has come to a man, God "conforms" him to His Son. As we
have already noted, both the opus alienum and the opus proprium are re-
vealed in Christ, the former in His cross, the latter in His resurrection.²⁶
In that the believer is to be conformed to Christ, God deals with him in
wrath as well as in grace. There are always "cross and victory, death and
resurrection, judgment and grace, hell and heaven" in the Christian life.²⁷
The alien work of God is the crucifixion and mortification of the old man,
His proper work is justification and the vivification of the new man.²⁸

In being conformed to Christ, the believer is drawn from "his own I"
to Christ, and through Christ to God.²⁹ In commenting on Galatians 2:20,
"It is no longer I who live; but Christ who lives in me; and the life I
now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God," Luther wrote, the
Christian does not live "in his own person," but Christ lives in him. The
person still lives, but "not in himself." The "I" apart from Christ belongs
to "death and hell."³⁰ There is a "double life" in the Christian. The

²³ The Sermon On The Mount, LW 21, p. 81; The Freedom Of A Christian, LW 31, p. 359.

²⁴ Galatians, p. 81.

²⁵ Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, LW 22, p. 72.

²⁶ See Holl, Third Ed., p. 69, footnote 4.

²⁷ Vogelsang, p. 61.

²⁸ Watson, p. 158.

²⁹ Vogelsang, p. 61.

³⁰ Galatians, pp. 168, 172.

first is the "I," the natural man; the second is the life of another, the life of Christ in him. The Christian is dead to his "I." He lives another life. Luther wrote, "Paul is dead," it is "the Christian" who now lives.³¹

Luther's dialectic then is old man/new man, opus alienum/opus proprium Dei, or as he most often put it, law/gospel. In so far as grace is given man, the old man dies, and the Christian dies to the law which has dominion only over the old man.³² However, since the old man remains in the Christian side by side with the new man, the law must remain to "crucify" it.³³ Therefore the law and the gospel are both present in the believer his life-long. The law rules the old man, the flesh; and the gospel the new man, the spirit. The Christian walks between them.³⁴

it seemeth a very strange and monstrous manner of speaking thus to say: I live, I live not; I am dead, I am not dead; I am a sinner, I am not a sinner; I have the law, I have not the law... in that they behold themselves, they have both the law and sin; but in that they look unto Christ, they are dead to the law, and have no sin.³⁵

Justification, while it begins in the present, is never completed in this life.³⁶ The Christian is clothed with the righteousness of Christ, however his cure is not accomplished at once but is gradual. He is "always

³¹Galatians, p. 171.

³²Römerbrief, Glossae 61, 16f., footnote, pp. 248-249; Galatians, pp. 169, 159-160.

³³Galatians, pp. 160-161.

³⁴Ibid., p. 291; Prenter, "Luther On Word And Sacrament," pp. 79-80; Holl, Third Ed., pp. 93-94.

³⁵Galatians, pp. 169-170.

³⁶Watson, pp. 165-166.

being justified."³⁷ Luther wrote that there are two parts to justification. The first is grace, the finding of "a gracious God" and trust in Him. The second is growth, the conferring of the Holy Spirit, whose gifts are to increase daily in the Christian,³⁸ together with the cleansing out of "the remnants of sin." Although he has received grace the Christian is not righteous "according to substance or quality," but in his relationship to Christ. The flesh and sin still remain to war against the spirit. They have begun to be buried in baptism, but they have not been completely buried.³⁹ The "burying" must be completed. "Adam must get out and Christ come in, Adam become as nothing and Christ alone remain and rule."⁴⁰

Luther used the parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate this point. He who came upon the man who had fallen among the thieves

did not straightway cure him altogether. Similarly, we too are not entirely cured by baptism or repentance, but a beginning is made in us and the bandage of the first grace binds our wounds so that our healing may proceed from day to day until we are cured.

As long as the Christian lives on the earth, he is "a work that God has begun, but not yet completed."⁴¹ Like the Good Samaritan, Christ first pours in oil, i.e. His grace. Afterwards He pours wine into the man's wounds as well to cleanse and purify the old man. He is not immediately restored to

³⁷Rupp, pp. 154, 182; Mackinnon, p. 201; Pinomaa, p. 102.

³⁸Psalm 51, LW 12, p. 331.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 329-330.

⁴⁰Psalm 51, LW 14, p. 167; Galatians, pp. 188-189.

⁴¹Defense And Explanation Of All The Articles, 1521, LW 32, p. 24; Römerbrief, p. 145; see also Galatians, pp. 457-458; Two Kinds Of Righteousness, LW 31, pp. 298, 300.

health,⁴² But remains "under the Physician's care" and "must cleanse his wounds daily."⁴³

this life...is not godliness but the process of becoming godly, not health but getting well, not being but becoming... We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way. The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on. This is not the goal, but it is the right road.⁴⁴

The flesh remains in man as long as he lives upon the earth and the law remains as its "schoolmaster," "in one more and in another less, as their faith is strong or weak."⁴⁵ The old man and the new exist side by side in the Christian. With the one he serves sin and with the other God.⁴⁶

The meaning Luther gave the terms "flesh" and "spirit" is very close to the Biblical usage.

everything is...spirit...that proceeds from the Holy Spirit, no matter how corporeal, external and visible it may be. And everything is flesh...that proceeds without spirit from the natural powers of the flesh, no matter how inward and invisible it may be.⁴⁷

Luther always used the terms as "predicates of the same subject, the total man."⁴⁸ In Luther's usage flesh and spirit may simply be given as old man

⁴² Sermons ML, Ser. XXVIII, "The Difference Between The Law And The Gospel," p. 358.

⁴³ The Last Sermon In Wittenberg, 1546, LW 51, p. 373.

⁴⁴ Defense And Explanation Of All The Articles, LW 32, p. 24; see also Galatians, p. 338.

⁴⁵ Galatians, p. 337; see also Römerbrief, p. 227; Psalm 51, LW 12, p. 330.

⁴⁶ Defense And Explanation Of All The Articles, LW 32, p. 21; Galatians, p. 26; Pinomaa, p. 101.

⁴⁷ A 23, 201 f., quoted Galatians, Ed. Preface, P.S. Watson, p. 8.

⁴⁸ Luther's Works, Vol. 21, Ed. Intro., Jaroslav Pelikan, pp. X, XI.

and new man.⁴⁹

Thus Luther can say in his famous formula, the Christian is "always a sinner, always a penitent, always righteous." Penitence is the midpoint between the poles of unrighteousness and righteousness. When man looks to his "starting-point," he is a sinner. When he looks to the "goal," he is righteous.⁵⁰ The Christian is always a sinner, "flesh," old man, in that his own righteousness is under condemnation, but when he turns to the alien righteousness of Christ, he is righteous, "spirit," new man.⁵¹

There is continual conflict between the old man of the law and the new man of faith. The old man will diminish as faith grows, but not without great conflict.⁵² The man of pride and security encounters no resistance from the flesh because he follows where it leads.⁵³ But the Christian is not called to "leisure," but to the "military service" of God, i.e. combat against sin and the flesh.⁵⁶

Thus the law continues in the Christian as well as faith. At one time, the Christian fears the wrath of God and trusts in His mercy. Luther wrote, what could be more contrary?, "the one is hell, the other heaven."⁵⁷ Every day in the life of the Christian, there is found "some while the time of the law, and some while the time of grace." The law brings knowledge of sin and this "torments" the Christian with "heaviness of heart," but grace

⁴⁹Holl, p. 119

⁵⁰Römerbrief, pp. 400-402.

⁵¹Rupp, pp. 179, 183.

⁵²Galatians, pp. 211-212, 378, 503, 507.

⁵³Defense And Explanation Of All The Articles, LW 32, p. 23.

⁵⁴Römerbrief, p. 270.

⁵⁵Galatians, p. 565.

⁵⁶Boehmer, Road To Reformation, p. 132.

⁵⁷Galatians, p. 328.

raises him up again.⁵⁸

The fear of God is an holy and precious thing, but it must not be eternal. Indeed it ought to be always in a Christian, because sin is always in him; but it must not be alone....A Christian... must vanquish fear by faith in the Word of grace.⁵⁹

The "killing of the old Adam" and the "resurrection of the new man" continue in the Christian his life-long.⁶⁰ Luther called this "death" and "resurrection" the two parts of justification.⁶¹ The mortifying of the flesh and the renewing of the new man are daily occurrences.⁶² That which Christ did once in history, abolishing the law and bringing life to man, must take place spiritually "every day in every Christian,"⁶³ that he may be "washed" and become "purer day by day."⁶⁴ Again and again he must go back to the beginning and start over.⁶⁵ He moves from "one grace to another" and from "one faith to another." God seeks him ever anew and he is found by Him ever anew.⁶⁶ Therefore despair of self and the search for grace are daily and life-long.

God deals strangely with His children. He blesses them with contradictory and disharmonious things, for hope and despair are opposites. Yet His children

⁵⁸Galatians, pp. 329-330, 348.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 331; see also Galatians, pp. 375, 28, 291, 337; Römerbrief, p. 245; Watson, p. 158.

⁶⁰Watson, pp. 165-166; Holl, Third Ed., pp. 94, 229.

⁶¹Watson, *ibid.*

⁶²Galatians, p. 337.

⁶³Ibid., p. 329.

⁶⁴Psalm 51, LW 12, p. 330; Römerbrief, pp. 400-402.

⁶⁵Römerbrief, pp. 454-456; Rupp, p. 154.

⁶⁶Holl, p. 122.

must hope in despair...And these two things, direct opposites by nature, must be in us, because in us two natures are opposed to each other, the old man and the new man. The old man must fear, despair, and perish; the new man must hope, be raised up, and stand.⁶⁷

The Christian walks between these poles.⁶⁸

The opus alienum Dei effects mortification through: Anfechtung, the law, and the cross of the Christian. Anfechtung, as the "trial" of faith, reveals that the old man is sinful and lost, and, since this destroys man's false sense of self-security, it effects mortification.⁶⁹ The law brings man to knowledge of sin and thus prepares him for the gracious forgiveness of God. The opus alienum Dei is also to be seen in the cross of persecution which comes to the Christian.⁷⁰ Even the hostility of the world directed against the Christian because of his faith is used by God for mortification, so that He may ultimately bring him closer to Himself. We must study these aspects of the opus alienum Dei more fully.

THE OPUS ALIENUM DEI:

B. ANFECHTUNG

"If I should still live awhile, I would like to write a book about

⁶⁷Psalm 130, LW 14, p. 191.

⁶⁸See also Holl, p. 122; Galatians, pp. 228, 338.

⁶⁹Bühler, Paul, Die Anfechtung bei Martin Luther, Zurich, 1942, p. 195.

⁷⁰Against The Heavenly Prophets, LW 40, pp. 148-149; Psalm 68, LW 13, pp. 10-11; Psalm 111, LW 13, pp. 379-380.

Anfechtungen, without which one can neither understand the Scripture nor know the fear and love of God."¹ In such a way Luther spoke about the deep spiritual experiences which were so much a part of his struggle for faith, first in the long years in the monastery, but even in later life in his lonely role as Reformer. His Theology of the Cross was a theology of Anfechtung.²

Scholars generally have remarked how striking it is that Luther employed the word, Anfechtung, rather than the more common German word for temptation, Versuchung.³ For Anfechtung, while translatable as temptation, carries more the connotation of "attacking."^{4,5,6} The best English equivalent seems to be "trial," rather than temptation, which in its general use has the meaning of entice.

For Luther's word, Anfechtung, Gordon Rupp suggests Bunyan's phrase, "the bruised conscience." Lennart Pinomaa suggests "the tempted conscience." For Anfechtung is the fight for faith.⁷ "It is all the doubt, turmoil, pang, tremor, panic, despair, desolation, and desperation which invade the spirit

¹ TR. IV. Nr. 4777, quoted in Vogelsang, frontespiece.

² von Loewenich, p. 184; Holl, Third Ed., p. 67.

³ Eg. Pinomaa, p. 155; see also Bornkamm, "Luther's World Of Thought", pp. 73-74.

⁴ Cassell's New German And English Dictionary, by Karl Breul, Revised and enlarged by Lepper and Kottenhahn, New York, 1939.

⁵ Where Luther uses both Anfechtung and Versuchung, in commenting on "and lead us not into temptation," the translator of Vol. 51 of Luther's Works translates the former as "trial" and the latter as "temptation."

⁶ Luther's Latin word is tentatio, for which, in addition to Anfechtung, he uses as German synonyms: prüfen (to try, test), auf die Probe stellen (to put to the test), angreifen (to seize, assail, attack), and beunruhigen (to trouble, harass) (Bühler, p. 83, footnote 31).

⁷ Rupp, pp. 105, 252; Pinomaa, Lennart, Der existentielle Charakter der Theologie Luthers, Helsinki 1940, p. 251.

of man."⁸ The battleground is the inner man. All consolation is lost and man becomes "naked and bare."⁹ Like Christ in the wilderness, the Christian feels "forsaken" by God, without anything he can trust and no one to whom he can look for help.¹⁰ It is the "wrath of God as experience."¹¹

Luther oftenspoke of the adversary as the devil, in the sense that God "conceals and hides Himself and lets the devil do with us what he pleases." As in the case of Job, when God "goes away and leaves room" for the devil, this is Anfechtung,¹² But there is no dualism here, for even the devil is an instrument in God's hands.¹³ The real adversary in Anfechtung is none other than God Himself.¹⁴ Anfechtung is a "turning away on the part of God." It is

that inner hurt of the soul, the feeling of being forsaken and rejected by God...there is no greater pain than the gnawing pangs of conscience, which occur when God withholds truth, righteousness, wisdom...and nothing remains but sin, darkness, pain, and woe. This is a sample or foretaste of the pains of hell and everlasting damnation.¹⁵

⁸Bainton, Roland, Here I Stand, New York, 1950, p. 31.

⁹Bühler, pp. 1,2, 73, 76.

¹⁰Sermons ML, Ser. XXIII, "Of Temptation," p. 301; Pinomaa, p. 158; Vogelsang, p. 6; Harnack, T., pp. 402-403; It is "an experience described by Luther again and again with a recurring exactness and a poignant realism which makes such passages stand out often with sombre and solemn beauty." (Rupp, p. 107)

¹¹Pinomaa, pp. 13, 153.

¹²Psalm 8, LW 12, p. 125; Pinomaa, p. 180; Bühler, pp. 5-9.

¹³Bühler, pp. 211-212.

¹⁴See also von Loewenich, pp. 186, 188-189.

¹⁵Psalm 6, LW 14, pp. 142-143.

Thus Anfechtung is a kind of "spiritual death."

Man is hemmed in by anxiety and fear and his conscience is a prison to him. Rupp terms this "a kind of spiritual claustrophobia."¹⁶ Man would like to flee to the ends of the earth, but the world has become "too narrow" for him and there is nowhere he can flee.¹⁷

like as...the worldly shutting up or prison is bodily...
and he that is shut up can have no use of his body: even so the spiritual prison is a trouble and anguish of mind, and he that is shut up in this prison cannot enjoy quietness of heart and peace of conscience.¹⁸

In these hours, the gospel and grace are lost, "shadowed from me with thick, dark clouds."¹⁹

As we noted earlier,²⁰ whenever God comes to man He does so both in His opus alienum and His opus proprium. Whenever He wishes to confer grace, He first prepares the way. The opus alienum Dei, whether it comes more specifically as the law accusing the conscience, or as the cross of affliction which the Christian must bear, evokes Anfechtung. Anfechtung describes the assault on faith which can take place from many different sides. As such it is a more ambiguous and less sharply defined concept than that of the law or the cross of the Christian, but it is nevertheless, together with them, an important part of the opus alienum Dei.

the 'new creation' and the entry of grace begin with

¹⁶Rupp, p. 109.

¹⁷Pinomaa, p. 159.

¹⁸Galatians, p. 327; see also Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, p. 207; Psalms 118, LW 14, p. 59.

¹⁹Galatians, p. 76.

²⁰See p. 15 above.

a profound assault and terror attacking the conscience...

Rev. 3:20 calls this 'God's knocking' or 'visitation' and this gives so much pain that man wants to die and thinks that he must perish. But at the same time God pours grace and strength into him so that he does not despair...It is during such storms of adversity that God pours His grace into us...'Him on whom God wishes to bestow His grace, He assails by bringing upon him all sorts of misfortune, inward and outward, until he thinks that he must perish because of the greatness of the storm and the assault.'

Those who do not accept these works and ways of God drive away His grace. They cannot greet God when He meets them. This greeting is awful in the beginning but comforting in the end...Therefore, a repentance which is preoccupied with thoughts of peace is hypocrisy. It must express a great earnestness and deep pain if the old man is to be put off.²¹

This "visitation" of God von Loewenich calls the "existential moment of faith."²²

Anfechtung is a term which Luther used so widely and loosely that no systematization of Anfechtungen is altogether possible or satisfying.²³

²¹Defense And Explanation Of All The Articles, 1521, LW 32, p. 40.

²²von Loewenich, p. 183.

²³Bühler, pp. 5-6; However, in commenting on the temptation of Christ, Luther distinguishes (in the order of St. Matthew's account): the Anfechtung of "adversity," the "spiritual" Anfechtung, and the Anfechtung of "prosperity." (Sermons ML, Ser. XXIII, "Of Temptation," p. 309)

However, Luther did distinguish between "bodily" or physical Anfechtungen and spiritual Anfechtungen.²⁴ The distinction may be more clearly made by using the terms, "outward" and "inward."²⁵

The "outward" Anfechtungen involve, for example, the things of the world being taken from man to show whether his faith is in God or in "things".²⁶ They may involve poverty, hunger, war, plague, persecution, sickness. When these come upon the Christian, he is moved to ask, "has God forgotten me?" or "is God angry with me?" He questions whether God is not God, since He does not care for him better.²⁷ However, Luther taught that these Anfechtungen are relatively easily borne, if there is peace within. Outward Anfechtungen are only the "ABCs;" spiritual Anfechtungen, when faith itself is assaulted and "tried," are what Luther properly called Anfechtungen.²⁸

These may be divided into two kinds: those of sin and the law, and those of election and hell. The first takes place when the Christian becomes aware of his sin over against the holiness of God and is filled with anxiety as a result.²⁹ As such it is the experience of God's wrath against sin. Man knows he is a sinner and that God is the adversary of sin. The sinner cannot destroy God and God's wrath threatens to destroy him.³⁰

The Anfechtung of Adversity is that of "misfortune" e.g. sickness, poverty, dishonor. The Anfechtung of Prosperity is that of "good fortune." The Spiritual Anfechtung is the greatest, for it is the Anfechtung of faith which leads man to question his faith and to doubt his salvation. (Bühler, pp. 3-5.)

²⁴ Vogelsang, p. 11.

²⁵ Eg. Galatians, p. 402; Römerbrief, p. 435; see also Vogelsang, p. 13.

²⁶ See Vogelsang, p. 11.

²⁷ Bühler, pp. 35-36, 3.

²⁸ Vogelsang, pp. 13, 15; Sermons ML, Ser. XXIII, "Of Temptation," p. 310.

²⁹ Vogelsang, pp. 25-26.

³⁰ Pinomaa, pp. 156, 158-161; Bühler, pp. 43-44, 49-50, 55-56.

Man knows himself to be a sinner and that "the wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23)³¹ Despair follows.

The second spiritual Anfechtung is that of election and hell. To understand the force of this conception for Luther, we must remember the Occamist conception of God as one who elects some to be saved and some to be damned.³² It is not that this Anfechtung questions the gospel or Christ as Savior, rather it asks, is the gospel a word for me? and is Christ my Savior? The Christian questions whether God has chosen (elected) him, whether God has planted faith in him, or whether his faith is imagined, i.e. faith itself is "tried."³³ It is also an Anfechtung to hell, in that the Christian asks whether the same God who saves, could not as well eternally reject and damn him. This was the greatest Anfechtung of all for Luther.³⁴ He teaches it is experienced only by a few, for God spares the weaker Christians it and no one ought ever to seek it, but instead to hold fast to the gospel.³⁵

Luther did not originate the concept of Anfechtung, for there were many books of consolation written in the Middle Ages for those suffering from such "trials." Life in the cloister was given to Anfechtung-like experiences.³⁶ However, the Middle Ages knew only the physical or outward Anfechtungen, which for Luther were the least of all.³⁷ Luther gave the concept a whole new importance and set it in a different context.³⁸

³¹Psalm 90, LW 13, p. 116.

³²Boehmer, Road To Reformation, p. 97; Luther, p. 57; Küstlin, p. 40; Pinomaa, p. 172.

³³Vogelsang, pp. 32-33.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 32-33, 35, 64; Pinomaa, p. 177; Bühler, pp. 59-61.

³⁵Vogelsang, pp. 65, 67.

³⁶Bühler, pp. 152-153.

³⁷Pinomaa, p. 156.

³⁸Vogelsang, p. 22.

Luther's teaching on Anfechtung was not derived from any theory or speculative theology, but came out of his own experience.³⁹ As such it is a concept that runs like a thread through his writings. He did not carefully or exactly define the concept and it belongs nowhere in his theology simply because it belongs everywhere. He saw the psalms as records of spiritual struggles like those through which he was passing and from them he derived much of the content and language of his teaching on Anfechtung.⁴⁰

Luther wrote that his theology was won in battle with Anfechtungen, and that The Theology Of The Cross can be learned only under the cross and in Anfechtung.⁴¹ Luther's own Anfechtungen were life-long. In the cloister, they were reactions to his search for righteousness through works. In later life they centered in his role as Reformer, as Anfechtungen of his "calling." They were given content by the schism of the Church and the bloodshed which followed.⁴²

Luther's darkest days were not necessarily those before he had discovered the grace of God. Some of them came in later life, when faith failed him and he longed to experience the grace of God again. But he learned to live through Anfechtungen, from one experience of God's grace to another.⁴³ Luther was wholly aware that such Anfechtungen as he experienced did not come to all men. He taught the deepest Anfechtungen came only to the stronger Christians. The average man knew nothing of them, because his security held him captive

³⁹Bühler, p. 2.

⁴⁰Bainton, p. 262; Vogelsang, p. 41.

⁴¹Bühler, pp. 205-206; see also Bainton, pp. 282-283.

⁴²Bühler, pp. 64, 66-67.

⁴³Dillenberger, pp. 166-167; Boehmer, Road To Reformation, p. 277.

and made them impossible.⁴⁴

It is the Christian who is "tried." The unbeliever is not "tried," because he is not in opposition to sin, the world, and the flesh. In fact he makes his peace with them in order to be free of Anfechtung.⁴⁵ If Anfechtung does not come to the Christian, it is a sign that his faith is not sound and that he has not truly received the gospel. "It is perilous therefore for a man to believe."⁴⁶ It is to the Christian that Anfechtung comes and seems to be only "wrath, punishment, and torment from God," while the godless seem to be the very children of God because they enjoy so many temporal blessings.⁴⁷ It is the Christian who is "tried and embattled" to the uttermost limits of his power, like gold in a crucible.⁴⁸

When the Christian asks, am I alone "tried," he can be sure that he is not alone. The communion of saints is a communion of the angefochtenen. Foremost among them is the angefochtene Christ. His ministry begins with the great Anfechtung immediately following His baptism and Anfechtungen mark His whole ministry, culminating in the great struggles in Gethsemane

⁴⁴Rupp, p. 114; Vogelsang, pp. 83, 7; The place of Anfechtung in Luther's theology changes through the years. Until 1525 the events of Gethsemane and Golgatha are treated as Anfechtungen of Christ. Later these events are interpreted in terms of Christ's struggle and victory over sin, death, and the devil. Christological arguments have more weight and a clear distinction is made between Christ's sufferings as those of a Lord and the Christian's as those of a servant. (Vogelsang, pp. 82, 97; Pinomaa, pp. 170, 172) One important reason for the change in emphasis is his struggle with the Schwärmer in the last half of the 1520s. Their unevangelical emphasis on the imitatio Christi he sees as leading to a new asceticism and he repudiates all self-made Anfechtungen. However, he increasingly turns back to his teaching on Anfechtung after 1536.

(Vogelsang, pp. 90-91)

⁴⁵Bühler, pp. 70-71; Psalm 110, LW 13, p. 240.

⁴⁶Sermons ML, Ser. XXIX, "Concerning The Exercise And Increase Of Faith," p. 360.

⁴⁷Psalm 118, LW 14, p. 58.

⁴⁸Römerbrief, p. 240.

and on Golgatha.⁴⁹ The latter reaches its climax in the cry of dereliction from the cross.⁵⁰ It is because Luther believed one must begin with this Christ, humiliated and despised, Christ as really angefochtenen in the "offense" of the cross, that he called his theology The Theology of the Cross.⁵¹

There were also patriarchs and prophets and apostles among the angefochtenen. Only the false church is free from Anfechtung and lives in security.⁵² Outstanding examples Luther treated at length are Abraham⁵³ and Jonah.⁵⁴

Luther's exposition of the story of the Canaanite woman is a classic example of his description of and writing about Anfechtung. Christ said to her, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel...It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs...Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." (Matt. 15: 24, 26, 27) "She did not dispute His judgment. She agreed she was a dog. She asked no more than that which befits a dog." Therefore, Christ did not treat her as a dog, but as one of the children of God.⁵⁵

Luther found Anfechtung clearly illustrated here. Christ "tried" the faith of the woman first by being silent to her, then repelling her request, and finally reproaching her as lost and damned. But the woman remained unmoved in her confidence. She did not mind His repelling her and she acknowledged His judgment of damnation on her sin to be just.⁵⁶

Luther wrote,

⁴⁹Bühler, p. 168; Vogelsang, p. 122; Römerbrief, p. 148.

⁵⁰Rupp, p. 238; Bühler, p. 170.

⁵¹Vogelsang, pp. 21, 25, 52-53, 103; see also Bainton, p. 47; Bühler, pp. 171-2.

⁵²Bühler, pp. 176-178.

⁵³Eg. Römerbrief, p. 405; see also Bainton pp. 289-290. (WA 43. 200-220)

⁵⁴See Bainton, pp. 278-280. (WA 19. 185-251)

⁵⁵WA 17. 2.202 quoted in Bainton, p. 284.

⁵⁶Vogelsang, pp. 150-151; Bühler, pp. 100-101.

All Christ's answers sounded like no, but He did not mean no. He had not said that she was not of the house of Israel. He had not said that she was a dog. He had not said no. Yet all His answers were more like no than yes. This shows how our heart feels in despondency. It sees nothing but a plain no. Therefore it must turn to the deep hidden yes under the no and hold with a firm faith to God's word.⁵⁷

God desires "trial" (Bewahrung) and to "try" or "test" (erproben) the Christian, "for He acknowledges only the worth of that which He has previously tested. (geprüft)"⁵⁸ "Trial" is God's "end purpose," for He wants man to know his inner condition and to see whether he really loves Him for His sake alone. This God knows without testing him. Luther wrote that if God did not "try" man, it would be impossible for anyone to be saved.⁵⁹ Anfechtungen are then part of God's "correction and scourging."⁶⁰ It is God as a loving Father who corrects His child. Were one to ask why Christians must suffer so, while unbelievers prosper, Luther answered with a distinction between sons and servants. God corrects his sons more than the servants, for He means to give them the kingdom.⁶¹

It is the "school of Anfechtung,"⁶² necessary because the flesh remains even in the Christian and needs correction. It is a "hard school," "this terrible-wholesome, wrathful-gracious school of God Anfechtung," but it

⁵⁷WA 17.2.202 quoted in Bainton, p. 284.

⁵⁸Römerbrief, p. 54; see also pp. 204-205; Psalm 45, LW 12, p. 296.

⁵⁹Römerbrief, p. 203

⁶⁰Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 5, LW 31, pp. 91-94.

⁶¹Bühler, pp. 217, 37, 223.

⁶²Fife, p. 226

brings forth fruit.⁶³

Anfechtungen come out of a "peculiar good intention of God."⁶⁴ For it is the nature of God that He "kills and brings to life...brings down to Sheol and raises up." (I Sam. 2:6) When God deals with man angrily, He deals in a kindly way, and when He destroys, He completes.⁶⁵

Anfechtungen then belong to the opus alienum Dei. As we have noted above, faith must move again and again through God's opus alienum to His opus Proprium. In this sense, Luther could liken Anfechtung to the labor pains of a woman giving birth.⁶⁶ Anfechtung as a "trial" of faith is nevertheless sent to strengthen faith and as such is an evidence of God's love beneath His wrath.⁶⁷

We grope with our hands for the mercy and arm of God, and unable to feel them, suppose our cause lost...as though God's grace and mercy had forsaken us and His arm turned against us. This we do because we do not know His proper works and therefore do not know Him, neither His mercy nor His arm.⁶⁸

The Christian who understands the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei, even when he is "tried (geprüft) the hardest," perceives God's good will in Anfechtung.⁶⁹ For Anfechtungen are meant for the Christian's betterment and

⁶³ Böhler, pp. 208, 217, 180-183, 219, 223.

⁶⁴ Vogelsang, p. 61.

⁶⁵ Römerbrief, pp. 409-412.

⁶⁶ Böhler, p. 194; von Loewenich, pp. 185, 189-190.

⁶⁷ Harnack, T., pp. 412-413, 418; Böhler, pp. 222-223; see also Psalm 90, LW 13, p. 113; Psalm 118, LW 14, p. 49; Pinomaa, pp. 182, 204, Vogelsang, p. 61; Römerbrief, pp. 409-412.

⁶⁸ The Magnificat, LW 21, p. 341.

⁶⁹ Römerbrief, p. 404.

"God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." (I Cor. 10:13) Anfechtung is a blessing, which comes out of God's wonderful wisdom and by which He awakens a hunger for righteousness in man.⁷⁰ In fact, there is "no more reliable sign" that God has received a man for grace than the presence of Anfechtung in his life.⁷¹

Anfechtungen teach man his need for God, "that we may know that He is our God" and drive him to God for safety.⁷² By them God destroys the basis for man's security and makes him "naked and bare," so that he can no longer look to his merits, as contributing to salvation. They lead to despair of everything creaturely and bring man out of himself to seek help in God alone.⁷³ Without Anfechtungen, there would remain room for man's false trust in his merits.⁷⁴ Through them, on the other hand, the flesh is destroyed, when it perceives that man's salvation in no way depends on itself and its deeds, but only on that which is outside itself, the grace of God.⁷⁵ In this sense, every Anfechtung has a cleansing and purifying character, expelling sin.⁷⁶

Luther wrote how "wonderfully" God deals with His own. To the man who prays for purity, God sends a greater temptation to lust. To him who prays for strength, He sends greater weakness. He does this, however, only to work "far more abundantly than all that we ask or think." (Eph. 3:20)⁷⁷ As we have noted before, God hides "His goodness under severity, His righteous-

⁷⁰Römerbrief, pp. 241-242, 405; Böhler, p. 206.

⁷¹Harnack, T., p. 422; Böhler, p. 209.

⁷²Sermons ML, Ser. XXIII, "Of Temptation," p. 303; Fife, p. 226.

⁷³Römerbrief, p. 205.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 315, 343.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 322.

⁷⁶Vogelsang, p. 58.

⁷⁷Römerbrief, pp. 308-309.

ness under sin, His mercy under wrath."

We pray for salvation; He however leads us, in order to save us, only deeper into damnation and hides under such stormy weather His favorable hearing.⁷⁸

God's basic purpose in Anfechtung is to create a sense of need for Himself in man and to drive him to His grace. As such Anfechtung is a true "exercise of faith," teaching man how weak his faith is,⁷⁹ that he may entreat for greater faith and actually increase in it.⁸⁰ Without Anfechtung, faith is always a "milk faith," while through this "purgatory of faith," it becomes more and more sure.⁸¹ Faith is never a certain possession, but is always being received as a new gift from God. God utilizes Anfechtungen that man may find Him again and again through them.⁸² In fact, Luther wrote that only that faith can remain alive which moves from the experience of the wrath of God in Anfechtung to the experience of the mercy of God over and over again. Or to put it somewhat differently, the mercy of God can only be experienced through the experience of His wrath.⁸³

The concept of Anfechtung is important to Luther's whole development and particularly to the understanding of his concept of faith. No one who takes seriously Luther's teaching on Anfechtung can possibly believe that by faith he means essentially "intellectual assent."⁸⁴

The Christian life is always in conflict and never free from the "com-

⁷⁸Römerbrief, pp. 313.

⁷⁹Sermons ML, Ser. XXIII, "Of Temptation," p. 301.

⁸⁰Ibid., Ser. XXIX, "Concerning The Exercise And Increase Of Faith," p. 365; Buhler, p. 219.

⁸¹Buhler, p. 207.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 185, 180; see also Dillenberger, p. 166.

⁸³von Loewenich, p. 190.

⁸⁴Rupp, p. 252.

bat" of Anfechtung. Luther's whole teaching on reconciliation is colored by his concept of Anfechtung.⁸⁵ Anfechtung and consolation follow one another like day and night in the life of the Christian, bringing him step by step closer to God.⁸⁶ Again and again man must be crushed by the opus alienum Dei, so that he may come to contrition and once again to faith. The Christian life moves "from law to gospel, from Anfechtung to faith, from despair to the assurance of salvation" over and over again. The Christian life is never a state, but always a battle. With his concept of Anfechtung, Luther described what may be called "the dialectic of the Christian life." The Christian is justified and yet a sinner, he is redeemed and not yet redeemed (i.e. not entirely free of the flesh), he is saved and an heir of eternal life and yet feels himself lost and in death. When he looks to God, he is in faith, but when he looks to himself there is only despair.⁸⁷

In this sense, Anfechtung may be described as a battle for the assurance of salvation. Man must daily battle for such an assurance. However, this is not to be confused with the security (Sicherheit) to which Luther was so strongly opposed. The former is an assurance in the promises of God, while the latter is a security in oneself and in one's works, piety, and merits.⁸⁸

Anfechtung then is necessary to the way of salvation and the Christian life and a mark of God's beloved. However, like the cross, it is the work

⁸⁵Vogelsang, p. 10; Pinomaa, pp. 196, 198.

⁸⁶Bühler, p. 218.

⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 189-190.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 186-189.

of God and is not to be sought or chosen.⁸⁹

Among the chief fruits of Anfechtung is first the "mortifying and crucifying" of the old man. Man is taught to know his sin, and his trust in his own righteousness is destroyed, in the storms of Anfechtung. The second chief fruit is humility. This humility was not a meritorious virtue, for Luther, in a monastic sense, but rather a state in which man no longer looks to or trusts in himself. As such it is the best preparation for hearing the gospel and for receiving the grace it brings. Anfechtung teaches man to place his trust in God and to leave behind all trust in himself. For man cannot come to God's mercy, until he hungers and thirsts for it, until he has been angefochten.⁹⁰

Anfechtungen destroy the pride of man over against God.⁹¹ Without the "fears and unrest" of Anfechtung, man simply "nestles down" in "security" once again.⁹² For Anfechtung, "shatters" this security and the self-righteousness which accompanies it.⁹³ Therefore many make themselves secure to escape Anfechtungen. They are unwilling to be "tried" in this way and to be moved to cry out in their need for help from God.⁹⁴ It is with this meaning Luther wrote, "the greatest security is the greatest temptation," or as we have noted he often puts it, "No temptation is the worst temptation." This is because it is precisely in Anfechtung that the Christian "forsakes himself and takes refuge in God."⁹⁵ Thus the Christian is led along the difficult path between pride and security on the one hand and

⁸⁹ Buhler, p. 209.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 195-197, 199-200.

⁹¹ Galatians, p. 539; von Loewenich, p. 190.

⁹² Römerbrief, p. 174.

⁹³ Buhler, pp. 81, 218.

⁹⁴ Sermon On The Fourth Sunday After The Epiphany, 1517, LW 51, pp. 25-26.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 24.



useless, tormenting despair on the other.⁹⁶

Luther wrote that the kingdom of God comes only under Anfechtungen.⁹⁷ God "reproves and chastens" man so that he will not be condemned.⁹⁸ God leads man into damnation, without which he cannot be saved, to show him that He alone saves. Therefore, man is not saved "accidentally" or "by chance" through Anfechtungen, but necessarily.⁹⁹

It is the angefochtene, humiliated, persecuted Christ who says, "I am the way..."¹⁰⁰ The only victory over Anfechtungen there is occurs when man no longer fears them, because he knows Christ and His victory over them. This victory must be "fought out" by the Christian in the very experience of Anfechtung.¹⁰¹ To the Christian who knows Christ as the "advocate of the poor, terrified conscience" and who believes in Him not as a Judge but as a Mediator between himself and God, there comes victory. To the angefochtenen, Christ says, "come unto Me and have no fear of any wrath."¹⁰² God reaches out His hand mercifully in Jesus Christ and victory comes to the man who flees to Him. In His humanity, in the tiny Baby in the manger and in the crucified Man in His wounds, Christ is to be seen in all His lowliness. There He reveals the mercy of God to all the weaknesses and needs of man.¹⁰³

⁹⁶Fife, p. 461; see also Galatians, pp. 332-333, 336; Römerbrief, pp. 175, 292.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 148.

⁹⁸Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, LW 22, p. 378; see also Vogelsang, p. 98; Böhler, pp. 81-82; Pinomaa, p. 196; Römerbrief, p. 205.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 315; Pinomaa, p. 174.

¹⁰⁰Sermons ML, Ser. XXXIV. "Christ The Way To Eternal Life," pp. 415-417; see also Galatians, pp. 191-192; Pinomaa, p. 170.

¹⁰¹Böhler, p. 192; Pinomaa pp. 167-169.

¹⁰²Sermon On The Sum Of The Christian Life, 1532, LW 51, p. 280.

¹⁰³Böhler, pp. 89-94, 97, 102-103; see also Vogelsang, p. 60.

In Anfechtungen the Christian experiences all "the conflicts and terrors of conscience." The only way to victory is for him to forget himself, his past life, and all his works and turn to God and what God can do.¹⁰⁴ It is the devil himself who keeps pointing man to his "personal righteousness," and away from the righteousness of Christ. He uses the image of man's "goodness to snatch from his eyes the image of the Man who died and rose again."¹⁰⁵ It is only through "great and often temptations" that man can learn to rely on the righteousness of Christ alone.¹⁰⁶ However, the Christian receives the victory at God's hand as he is given Christ again and again.¹⁰⁷

The Christian must come to understand that the "anguish of mind" which is Anfechtung, the "spiritual prison," must not continue forever, but only "until faith be revealed." For the Christian is angefochten, not to his destruction, but only that through Christ he may be "quickened again and restored to life."¹⁰⁸ It is therefore very important in Anfechtung to be able to distinguish between the law and the gospel.¹⁰⁹ Luther wrote, "in the time of temptation I confess that I myself do not know how to do it as I ought."¹¹⁰

in time of temptation thou shalt find the gospel but
as a stranger and a rare guest in thy conscience; but

¹⁰⁴ Galatians, pp. 167-177; Pinomaa, p. 171; Vogelsang, p. 58; see also

¹⁰⁵ Galatians, pp. 22.

¹⁰⁶ First Sermon At The Funeral Of The Elector, Duke John Of Saxony, 1532, LW 51, p. 240.

¹⁰⁷ Galatians, p. 464.

¹⁰⁸ Vogelsang, p. 71.

¹⁰⁹ Galatians, p. 327.

¹¹⁰ Böhler, pp. 118, 50.

Galatians, pp. 122, 84, 306-307.

the law, contrariwise, thou shalt find a familiar and a continual dweller within thee...Wherefore when thy conscience is terrified with sin...then say thou, there is a time to die and a time to live; there is a time to hear the law, and...there is a time to hear the gospel...let the law now depart, and let the gospel come.¹¹¹

Now I am bruised and afflicted enough; the time of the law hath tormented and vexed me sharply enough. Now is the time of grace; now is the time to hear Christ, out of whose mouth proceed the words of grace and life.¹¹²

The path out of Anfechtung leads "from the law and works, to the promise and faith; from wrath to grace; from sin to righteousness; and from death to life."¹¹³

Anfechtung is overcome, when the Christian gives himself willingly into it, acknowledging God's right to punish him, and lets God give him the victory.¹¹⁴ Luther wrote, the angefochtene Christian "believes he is very near condemnation...Blessed is he, however, if he endures this trial, for just when he thinks he has been consumed, he shall arise as the morning star." What he cannot find in himself, there is to be found when he turns to God in faith.¹¹⁵ For the same God who leads into the depths leads out of them. On

¹¹¹Galatians, pp. 122, 84, 306-307.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 304; see also pp. 348, 326.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 291.

¹¹⁴Vogelsang, pp. 38, 71.

¹¹⁵Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 5, LW 31, p. 100.

the side of man there is only despair. Victory in Anfechtung is God's act alone.¹¹⁶

The angefochtene Christ saw nothing but darkness on the cross, but even in the darkness He cried, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." This is faith's "highest art," to see God's fidelity where it cannot be seen. Therefore the way of faith is opposed to all the feelings of the angefochtene Christian. Even in Anfechtung, faith holds to God's promises of grace which cannot lie, and this is victory. Christ was borne through His sufferings only by hope in God's mercy. He fled to Him and abandoned Himself on Him.

It is God's way to hold the Christian precisely where he has fallen and to let him conquer precisely where he has been overcome.¹¹⁷ To quote Karl Holl again at this point,

Luther looks through the darkness and storm of God's wrath into God's will of love, and perceives, as he so wonderfully expresses it, under and above the 'no' the deep, secret 'yes' that God speaks to him.¹¹⁸

From God's side Anfechtung is nothing other than a means by which He would lead His child to Himself. Since this is His intention, victory over Anfechtung can only take place when the Christian flees to the wrathful God. As we have observed above, this means to hope when there is no basis for hope. It is to flee to God's promises (e.g. in the Scripture) despite His wrath experienced in Anfechtung.¹¹⁹ This is Luther's "flucht zu Gott gegen

¹¹⁶Vogelsang, pp. 67, 70.

¹¹⁷Ibid., pp. 59, 62-63.

¹¹⁸Holl, p. 59; see also von Loewenich, p. 186

¹¹⁹Pinomaa, pp. 162-163, 66.

Gott." Man must acknowledge God's judgment on his sin to be just and thus not flee judgment, but flee precisely to this wrathful God. This "flight" is possible only when God's intention in His alien work is understood by the Christian. It is not "in spite of" the opus alienum Dei, but precisely "in" it, that the opus proprium is found. In Anfechtung, the opus proprium cannot be seen. The angefochtene Christian must trust God in faith against all his own feelings. He must "break through the mask." He must advance from anxiety before the wrath of God to faith in His fatherly love.¹²⁰ This is the characteristic concept of faith in the Theology of the Cross.¹²¹

THE OPUS ALIENUM DEI:

C. THE LAW

It is only because man is a sinner that the Word of God confronts him in the double form of law and gospel. For the law is nothing other than God's judgment on sin.¹ There is no disunity in the Divine Nature, but as we have already noted, God must do that which is alien to Himself before He can come to that which is proper to His nature. In the same way the "two-fold Word" of God has as its purpose summoning man to repent through the law and to believe through the gospel.² To put it in another way, the law is directed to the proud and secure man who does not perceive his sin and the gospel to the humble sinner who feels his sin and confesses it.³

¹²⁰Bühler, pp. 221-222.

¹²¹von Loewenich, p. 186.

¹Harnack, T., p. 526.

²Watson, p. 160; Prenter, Regin, "Luther On Word And Sacrament", pp. 68-72.

³Harnack, T., p. 288.

"The law revealeth the disease, the gospel ministereth the medicine."⁴
Man is condemned and killed" by the law, but justified and restored to life
by the gospel.⁵

It is what Luther termed the "proper and spiritual" use of the law that effects the dying which precedes and accompanies the new life. This Luther expressed in the first words of his lectures on Romans: "The sum of this Epistle is to destroy, root out, and annihilate" the righteousness of the flesh, no matter how good it may appear and how sincerely it may be practiced, and instead "to implant, establish, and make great sin."⁶ The purpose of the spiritual use of the law is that sin may be revealed and also that it "might increase."⁷ In the first sense it "reveals" man's sin, his "hatred and contempt" for God and also the judgment of God on sin.⁸ It declares man to be unrighteous so that he may learn his true state and learn to be "silent" about his righteousness.⁹ In this way it reveals man's desperate condition and makes him ready for a cure.¹⁰ In the second sense the law increases transgressions, i.e. actually makes man worse.¹¹ When the judgment of God on sin is revealed to man through the law, he murmurs against

⁴Sermons ML, Ser. XXVIII, "The Difference Between The Law And The Gospel," p. 356.

⁵Galatians, p. 154; "The law uncovers sin and makes man worthy of punishment and sick; it proves him to be one who is damned...The Gospel offers grace, and forgives sin, checks the sickness and makes it well." (Römerbrief, p. 377); No concept of Luther's is more complex or many-sided than that of the law. It is what he terms the "spiritual" use of the law, as later Lutheran Orthodoxy had it the "second" use of the law, which speaks to our concern in this study.

⁶Römerbrief, p. 1

⁷Galatians, pp. 302-303.

⁸Ibid., pp. 298-299.

⁹Römerbrief, p. 129

¹⁰Watson, pp. 107, 110; Harnack, T., pp. 505, 511.

¹¹Galatians, pp. 298-299, 316.

God and resists His judgment, and thus his sin is actually "magnified." But even this increasing of sin has as its only purpose that sin may be "more known and seen."¹²

Therefore the law brings a knowledge of sin. Without the law man possesses no complete self-knowledge.¹³ When the law comes to man, the "old man" is "as it were born" in him,¹⁴ i.e. revealed. Man learns how deeply sin has taken root in him.¹⁵ Through the law man recognizes his inability to do good and despairs of this inability. He learns to despair of himself and to seek help elsewhere than in himself. He is truly humbled, "reduced to nothing in his own eyes," and taught there is no basis for justification or salvation in himself.¹⁶ While man is secure before the law comes to him, it effects guilt in him in the place of security. The purpose is that man may "be humbled, terrified, bruised and broken, and by this means may be driven to seek grace."¹⁷ For the first step to health is to admit that one is sick.¹⁸

The law is a mirror in which man sees himself as he is, "that he is a sinner, guilty of death, and worthy of God's everlasting wrath and damnation."¹⁹ The image it reflects shatters his "quietness and security."²⁰ The law is a "word of destruction, a word of wrath, a word of sadness, a

¹² Galatians, pp. 298-299, 316, pp. 302-303.

¹³ Römerbrief, footnote, p. 253.

¹⁴ Ibid., Glossae 60, 22 ff., footnote pp. 248-249; Galatians, p. 339.

¹⁵ Römerbrief, pp. 137-138.

¹⁶ The Freedom Of A Christian, 15, LW 31, p. 348.

¹⁷ Galatians, p. 316

¹⁸ Sermon On St. Thomas' Day LW 51, pp. 22-23

¹⁹ Galatians, p. 213; Sermons ML, Ser. XXVIII, "The Difference Between The Law And The Gospel," p. 356.

²⁰ Galatians, p. 153.

word of grief, a voice of the Judge."²¹

God cannot permit man to remain unbroken in his self-righteous piety. From Jeremiah 23:29: "Is not My word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces?," Luther derived the striking image of the law as the Hammer of God.²²

This is the hammer of death, the thundering of hell and the lightning of God's wrath, that beateth to powder the obstinate and senseless hypocrites...this is the proper...use of the law, by lightning, by tempest, and by the sound of the trumpet (as on Mt. Sinai) to terrify, and by thundering to beat down, and rend in pieces that beast which is called the opinion of righteousness.

As long as this opinion of his own righteousness remains in man, there is also pride and security and thus contempt for God's grace and mercy. The gospel cannot enter such a man, for "that mighty rock and adamant wall, "his opinion of his righteousness resists it. Therefore God must take his hammer in hand and destroy it."²³ If God were not to do this, man could never live.²⁴

Luther wrote that this knowledge of sin the law brings is not speculative. It is "a true experience and a very serious struggle of the heart." It is to

²¹ Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 58, LW 31, p. 231; see also Sermons ML, Ser. XXVIII, "The Difference Between The Law And The Gospel," p. 357; Galatians, pp. 296, 319-320, 323-324, 339; Harnack, T., p. 565.

²² Römerbrief, pp. 373-374; Psalms 90. LW 13, p. 117.

²³ Galatians, pp. 299-300.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 323-324; Luther also employs the figure of the law as an "Hercules" sent by God to deal with this "monster." (Galatians, pp. 298-299)

feel the "intolerable burden of the wrath of God."²⁵ Despair follows and man feels "cast into hell." His righteousness is reduced to nothing, there is nothing left in himself on which he can rely, and in such a condition he comes face to face with the righteous God.²⁶ He comes to know that "the wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23)²⁷ In this sense the law is "the ministry of wrath." It brings man to say, "I have sinned, therefore I must die."²⁸ Luther wrote, "it is a terrible thing to bear sin, the wrath of God, malediction, and death."²⁹ It is nothing other than to feel "cast from the face of God."³⁰

The purpose of this use of the law is that man may be led to repentance, "destroyed and broken," until he becomes "small," "humble and mild."³¹ It is man's "pernicious" opinion of his own righteousness, which will not permit him to be a sinner, which must be destroyed and man learn he is "forlorn, lost, and damned," if God's saving work is ever to be done.³²

The spiritual use of the law clearly belongs to the opus alienum Dei, for while these works of God in the law "are always unattractive and appear evil, they are nevertheless really eternal merits." Its purpose is to bring man to confess that there is nothing in him but sin, and that his "life is hidden in God (i.e. in bare confidence in His mercy)." God humbles in order that He

²⁵ Psalm 51, LW 12, p. 310.

²⁶ Ibid., LW 12, pp. 310-311.

²⁷ Psalm 90, LW 13, p. 116; Galatians, p. 152.

²⁸ Galatians, p. 153; Harnack, T. pp. 525-526.

²⁹ Galatians, pp. 279, 309.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 310.

³¹ Römerbrief, p. 122; Against The Heavenly Prophets In The Matter Of Images And Sacraments, LW 40, p. 82; Galatians, p. 312; Heidelberg Disputation, LW 31, p. 44.

³² Galatians, pp. 303-304.

may exalt.³³

Luther insisted that the gospel was not to be preached to a man who did not yet acknowledge his sin. Such a man must first have his pride crushed by the law and only then can the gospel be preached to him.³⁴ The man who does not feel his sin will not seek grace. God uses the law to humble for no other reason than that man may "thirst for grace."³⁵ The law does not reveal sin and death "as though it delighteth therein," but only that man may be "cast down" and "humbled" and thus be moved to seek God. The law is "to kill; and yet so, that God may be able to give life." Luther had God say, "I have not given the law, and killed thee by the law, that thou shouldest abide in this death; but that thou shouldest fear Me and live."³⁶

Luther wrote of the knowledge of sin the law brings, "How beneficial is such knowledge !" For it leads man to "sigh" to God and to plead to be healed in deepest humility. The man who does not know his sin, will not plead, and whoever will not plead, can receive nothing from God and will not be justified.³⁷ This awareness of sin, Luther called, "the climax of the drama which God enacts with us." It is not an evil thing for man to know his sin, rather it is necessary for him to feel this need for God, for it is as he experiences this sense of need that he "becomes aware of salvation."³⁸ Only the man who feels this sense of need can know God as his "Justifier and Redeemer."³⁹

³³Heidelberg Disputation, LW 31 p. 44.

³⁴Watson, pp. 156-157.

³⁵Psalm 68, LW 13, pp. 7-8.

³⁶Galatians, pp. 323-324, 348.

³⁷Römerbrief, p. 138.

³⁸Psalm 90, LW 13, pp. 116-117.

³⁹Psalm 51, LW 12, pp. 311-312.

In this way the work of the law is "an entrance into grace."⁴⁰ The law prepares the way for grace. For it is when man confesses "that there is no good thing in him" and when he acknowledges his sin "from the bottom of his heart," that the time of grace has come.⁴¹ To the man who seeks "the hand and aid" of God, His mercy is "exceeding sweet" and His grace "precious and inestimable."⁴²

In this sense the law is an "excellent thing,"⁴³ a "schoolmaster" who leads to Christ. It does this

like a good schoolmaster instructeth and exerciseth his scholars in reading and writing, to the end that they may come to the knowledge of good letters and other profitable things, that afterwards they may have a delight in doing of that which before, when they were constrained thereunto, they did against their wills.⁴⁴

When man is "bruised with this hammer" and brought to the "very brink of desperation," he comes to understand that God is present to the "contrite in heart" and he hears Christ saying, "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28)⁴⁵ "Like as... the dry earth coveteth the rain, even so the law maketh troubled hearts to thirst after Christ."⁴⁶

Man is a "prisoner under the law," but not forever.

⁴⁰Galatians, pp. 213, 303-304.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 317-318.

⁴²Ibid.,

⁴³Sermon On St. Thomas' Day, LW 51, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁴Galatians, pp. 334-335, 320.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 304.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 318.

the proper office of the law is to show unto us our sins, to make us guilty, to humble us, to kill us, and to bring us down to hell, and finally to take from us all help, all succour, all comfort: but yet altogether to this end, that we may be justified, exalted, quickened to life, carried up into heaven, and obtain all good things. Therefore it doth not only kill, but it killeth that we may live.⁴⁷

THE GOSPEL

The gospel is the proclamation of God's grace freely given, the forgiveness of sin, and peace of conscience.⁴⁸ When its work is done, there must come an end to the law and the beginning of grace. The law is to humble man only as long as is necessary for his "profit" and "salvation." Man must move from fear of God's wrath through the law to trust in His mercy through the gospel.⁴⁹

There is a time to die and a time to live...a time to hear the law, and a time to hear the gospel...let the law now depart, and let the Gospel come.⁵⁰

The law brings man to repentance

But we must not stop with that, for that would only amount to wounding and not binding up, smiting and not

⁴⁷Galatians, p. 333.

⁴⁸Sermon On St. Thomas' Day, LW 51, pp. 20-21.

⁴⁹Galatians, p. 328.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 124.

healing, killing and not making alive, leading down into hell and not bringing back again, humbling and not exalting.

Without grace, the work of the law would be all in vain.⁵¹ The law condemns, but only that the gospel may justify and restore to life. The law drives man from God, while the gospel reconciles him to God.

in the place of sin succeedeth righteousness; in the place of wrath, reconciliation and grace; in the place of death, life; and in the place of damnation, salvation.⁵²

As the law is directed to the proud and secure who do not know their sin, the gospel belongs to "grieving consciences" who feel their sin and confess it.⁵³ Its purpose is to "lift up those who are crushed,"⁵⁴ and to make out of a "terrified and despondent" conscience, a "good and sure conscience."⁵⁵

The two ministries of the law and the gospel are "of death" and "of life."⁵⁶ The man who has been "killed" by the law "comes to life again" through the gospel.⁵⁷ A new creature and a new life begin⁵⁸ through the faith which the gospel awakens in man's heart.⁵⁹

It is one art to tell what the disease is, and another to minister that which is good and wholesome to remedy

⁵¹The Freedom Of A Christian, LW 31, p. 364.

⁵²Galatians, p. 154; see also p. 330.

⁵³Harnack, T., p. 288; Sermon On St. Thomas' Day, LW 51, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁴Köstlin, Julius, Life Of Luther, London, 1912, pp. 58-59.

⁵⁵Psalm 68, LW 13, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁶Galatians, p. 151.

⁵⁷Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 58, LW 31, p. 231.

⁵⁸Watson, pp. 156-157.

⁵⁹The Freedom Of A Christian, LW 31, p. 364.

it...the law revealeth the disease, the gospel ministereth the medicine.⁶⁰

The gospel is nothing other than "the revelation of the Son of God,"⁶¹ not as an "angry Judge who is ready to punish," but as "the advocate of the poor, terrified conscience."⁶² One of Luther's favorite illustrations is that of the Good Samaritan. The man who is left "half dead" by the thieves is the man who has been bruised and stripped of His righteousness by the law. To such a one Christ comes as the Good Samaritan and shows him mercy. He says, you have not kept the law, believe in Me and enjoy My obedience and My righteousness as your own. This grace He pours into the poor man's wounds.⁶³

Thus God "kills us and He resurrects us; He humbles us, and He exalts us, each in His good season."⁶⁴

ALIEN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Luther's long struggle in the monastery ended when he renounced all confidence in his righteousness for a "righteousness not his own."⁶⁵ There are then two kinds of righteousness. In addition to man's own, there is an "alien righteousness," "the righteousness of another," which comes to him

⁶⁰ Sermons ML, Ser. XXVIII, "The Difference Between The Law And The Gospel," p. 356; Römerbrief, p. 377.

⁶¹ Galatians, p. 266; see also Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 58, LW 31, p. 231.

⁶² Sermon On The Sum Of The Christian Life, 1532, LW 51, p. 280.

⁶³ Sermons ML, Ser. XXVIII, "The Difference Between The Law And The Gospel," p. 358.

⁶⁴ Psalm 68, LW 13, pp. 7-8.

⁶⁵ Mackinnon, p. 90.

from without. The latter is the righteousness of Christ given to man in faith wherever there is true repentance.⁶⁶

The one is a righteousness of the law, the other of the gospel.⁶⁷ Personal righteousness is always a matter of the law,⁶⁸ while the righteousness of Christ is given through the gospel. These two forms of righteousness exclude each other, for the alien righteousness of Christ can only be received in faith, i.e. only where man has been emptied of all righteousness of the law.⁶⁹ "What is in man" must be destroyed and that planted in him which comes from Christ. For God does not save on the basis of any righteousness that is in man, but only through the righteousness of Christ.⁷⁰

wherefore Christ apprehended by faith, and dwelling in the heart, is the true Christian righteousness, for the which God counteth us righteous and giveth us eternal life.⁷¹

THE OPUS ALIENUM DEI:

D. THE CROSS OF THE CHRISTIAN

"The work of putting to death the old man"¹ also takes place, through

⁶⁶Two Kinds Of Righteousness, LW, 31, p. 297

⁶⁷Galatians, p. 25.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 167-168.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 67; see also p. 341.

⁷⁰Römerbrief, p. 2; Sermon On St. Matthew's Day, LW 51, pp. 28-29; Galatians, pp. 226, 223-224, 137.

⁷¹Galatians, p. 135.

¹Against The Heavenly Prophets, LW 40, pp. 82-83.

the cross. From the beginning Luther valued the cross, or unmerited suffering, very highly, teaching that by a patient endurance of it the Christian shows himself serious about following Christ. He believed there is nothing so valuable for the cultivation of the Christian life. As we have noted, so important was this to Luther that to give expression to it, he called his whole theology, "in those richest years of his inward life," *The Theology Of The Cross*.²

A theologian of the cross (that is, one who speaks of the crucified and hidden God) teaches that punishments, crosses, and death are the most precious treasury of all and the most sacred relics, which the Lord of this theology Himself has consecrated and blessed, not alone by the touch of His most holy flesh but also by the embrace of his exceedingly holy and divine will, and He has left these relics here to be...sought after and embraced.³

The *Theology of the Cross* is the theology of the God who comes to man in Jesus Christ and takes upon Him the consequences of his sin, enduring the torments of soul "which are the very pains of hell," to the cry of dereliction on the cross. Those who share in His victory must also share the struggle and live "under the cross." In this sense Luther wrote, "The cross is our theology."⁴ For him, the cross is always a symbol of the gift (bonum)

²Boehmer, *Road To Reformation*, pp. 135, 147-148; Holl, Third Ed., pp. 91-93.

³*Explanations Of The 95 Theses*, Thesis 58, LW 31, pp. 225-226.

⁴Quoted in Rupp, pp. 254-255.

of God, through which man is saved, and a symbol of the "highest task" laid upon him, the imitation (exemplum) of Christ.⁵ In the latter sense it means that Christ's humiliation is the way through which man comes to know God.⁶ In later years Luther often used the terminology, the "Theology from Below" (Boden), by which he meant that man must begin to understand Christ from the bottom, not the top, i.e. in His despised and humiliated form, in the "offense of the cross."⁷

The Christian is to follow the example of Christ.⁸ Luther used the striking word, gemellus, which means both "twin" and "double."⁹ It is the

⁵Boehmer, Luther, pp. 77-78; Road To Reformation, pp. 147-148.

⁶Rupp, p. 208.

⁷Vogelsang, pp. 20-21; see also Psalm 90, LW 13, Ed. Footnote, p. 110.

⁸Luther's distinction between Christ as Savior and Example is important and fundamental. Insofar as his justification is concerned, man must look to Christ only as Savior and not as an Example. Only after he has received Him as Savior can he follow His example. (Galatians, pp. 163, 257; see also pp. 339-340) Man may "put on Christ" in two ways: "When we are apparelled with Christ as with the robe of our righteousness and salvation, then we must put on Christ also as the apparel of imitation and example." (Ibid., pp. 341, 469-470) Justification is accomplished by Christ's cross, not by man's. (Ibid., p. 183) Only Christ bears the sins of the world. (Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, LW 22, p. 72) His is "that high crucifying" which works justification, as the cross of the Christian cannot do. (Galatians, pp. 166-167, 239-240)

Also involved is Luther's fundamental dialectic of law and gospel. For to follow Christ as an example is law, while to receive Him as Savior is gospel. (Ibid., pp. 339-340) To want to be like God by the law is the original sin of man, while to become like God, through Christ, i.e. by being "conformed" to Him is the very purpose of God in the gospel. This "double-edgedness is the deepest question of following Christ" in Luther's theology. Whoever would follow the example of Christ as a way of salvation, without having first received Him as Savior, merely recommit the original sin. The cross of the Christian can never make him into Christ. The conception of the imitatio Christi is the highest ideal of the middle ages, but Luther realized that if Christ is only an example, He is simply a new "standard," a new law, of which the Christian has not fulfilled the "thousandth part." (Vogelsang, pp. 53-57)

⁹Rupp, p. 225.

crucified Christ who says, "No one comes to the Father, but by me," (John 14:6)¹⁰ and "He who does not take his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10:38)¹¹ The cross of Christ and the cross of the Christian belong together.¹² With Christ's Passion as an example, the Christian is to "do that which He did and suffer that which He suffered."¹³

When God wanted to glorify Christ and set Him in His Kingship, He first permitted Him to perish and go into hell. He deals in the same way with all his own.¹⁴ The Christian cannot become one with the exalted Lord without first bearing the image of the humiliated Christ.¹⁵ "The means and cause of His (Christ's) glorification is His defeat." Since Christ "had to enter into His glory through suffering and death," it must be the same for all who belong to His kingdom. "His person serves as a model, and all those who are Christians must conform to His image...we must follow the path to glory and life through misery, persecution, shame, and death."¹⁶

The Christian must bear in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus.¹⁷ These "stripes and sufferings," won in the cause of Christ, are the "badge of Christ my Lord."¹⁸ "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." (Col. 1:24)¹⁹

¹⁰ Heidelberg Disputation, LW 31, p. 53.

¹¹ Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 1, LW 31, pp. 83-84.

¹² von Loewenich, p. 149; Luther never departed from this view. Ibid., p.157.

¹³ Galatians, pp. 339-340; Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, 1530, p. 198.

¹⁴ Röherbrief, p. 308; Sermon On The Man Born Blind, LW 51, pp. 39-42; Vogel-sang, p. 47; Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, p. 206.

¹⁵ Vogel-sang, p. 98; see also Psalm 118, LW 14, p. 96; Psalm 111, LW 13, p.379.

¹⁶ Psalm 110, LW 13, pp. 346-347.

¹⁷ Psalm 45, LW 12, p. 296.

¹⁸ Galatians, pp. 566-567.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 558.

Luther added, for "the sufferings of Christ in us are many."²⁰ "God has appointed that we should not only believe in the crucified Christ, but also be crucified with Him."²¹

The purpose of the cross is to conform the Christian to the image of Christ, that God may bring him to glory. This He cannot do "except through suffering and affliction."²² God "copies in us in the cross...the likeness of His Son."²³ The Christian must be like his Master in all things and it is a discipleship of suffering and the cross. The cross is the "highpoint" of this conformity.²⁴ This is so very important because following the example of Christ is the "rending to pieces of all human ways" and at the same time the basis for all God's ways.²⁵

When the cross comes, Luther wrote, let the Christian firmly believe that God is sending it to him and say, "Welcome, beloved relic." Let him give thanks to God that He considers him "worthy of what was most precious in His life."²⁶

In defining the cross of the Christian more clearly Luther designated poverty, hunger, war, plague, persecution, sickness, etc. as the "common cross" which is shared by all men even the heathen. The common cross becomes the "real cross," when it is borne for the sake of the Faith, i.e. when it has the nature of a confession of faith.²⁷

²⁰ Psalm 118, LW 14, p. 80.

²¹ Sermon at Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, p. 198.

²² Ibid., pp. 206, 199; Psalm 111, LW 13, p. 379.

²³ Vogelsang, p. 99.

²⁴ von Loewenich, pp. 157-159, 166.

²⁵ Vogelsang, pp. 56-57.

²⁶ Sermon On The Man Born Blind, LW 51, pp. 41-42; Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 58, LW 31, pp. 225-226.

²⁷ Vogelsang, pp. 11-12.

There can be no question of Luther's meaning when he wrote of the proper Christian cross. He always had persecution especially in mind.²⁸ Whenever Christ is preached to the world, persecution follows.²⁹ The world imagines it serves God and restores "peace and tranquility" in ridding the community of troublesome Christians.³⁰ The sincere Christian, like his Lord, will suffer "his Herods" and "Pilates" who "set themselves against him."³¹ Out of his own experience Luther wrote,

all things were in peace and tranquility before the gospel came abroad; but since the preaching and publishing thereof, all things are unquiet, and the whole world is in an uproar, so that every one armeth himself against another...³²

Any one who takes the gospel seriously must provoke the world to hate him.³³ The gospel is always a scandalum to the world.³⁴ It establishes the "righteousness of faith" in place of the "righteousness of the law," which man loves as his own. It preaches "Christ Crucified" against all the striving of man to achieve a righteousness of his own.³⁵ Thus it condemns "all religion of man's own devising." This is not to win the favor of the world. The world cannot abide hearing its righteousness condemned. The gospel attacks the "glory" of man and it cannot be other than that persecution

²⁸ Psalm 110, LW 13, p. 333.

²⁹ Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, p. 200; Galatians, p. 400; Römerbrief, p. 511.

³⁰ Galatians, pp. 477-478.

³¹ Psalm 2, LW 14, p. 321.

³² Galatians, p. 430.

³³ Boehmer, Road To Reformation, p. 148.

³⁴ von Loewenich, pp. 163-164.

³⁵ Galatians, p. 429.

follow.³⁶ Luther went so far as to write, "If we can so preach that the gospel is rejected (i.e. by those who glory in their self-righteousness), then things will be going as they should."³⁷

It must be persecution "for righteousness' sake." When this condition is absent, persecution can accomplish no good end. Even the wicked must suffer persecution. See to it therefore, wrote Luther, that your cause does not belong to you, but to Christ. Be sure that you have not "concocted" it yourself. At His word alone take the risk of suffering.³⁸

However, the Christian can be sure the cross will come "for what is of God must be crucified in the world."³⁹ Luther quoted Galatians 6:14, "Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world," adding, we crucify and condemn each other. By means of its own righteousness, Christ is crucified and the world is delivered from being crucified, while it persecutes Christians "as destroyers of religion and troublers of the public peace."⁴⁰ Christians have peace with God, but oppression in the world, while the un-righteousness have peace with the world, but oppression with God.⁴¹

The Christian's life is "veiled in many afflictions." His peace is hidden in the "ill-treatment" of the world. Peace does not seem to belong to him, while the cross is clearly his.⁴² For the gospel always stands under the cross.⁴³

³⁶Galatians, p.429., 71, 434; The Sermon On The Mount, LW 21, p. 50.

³⁷Two Sermons Preached At Weimar, The Second Sermon, LW 51, p. 113.

³⁸The Sermon On The Mount, LW 21, pp. 46-47.

³⁹Römerbrief, p. 54.

⁴⁰Galatians, pp. 560-561.

⁴¹Römerbrief, pp. 196-197.

⁴²Ibid., p. 127.

⁴³Ibid., p. 376.

Luther wrote that there are two churches, but only one preaches the gospel. There are "the purple-clad harlot going by the name of the true church...and the other, the one which is regarded as nothing and suffers, hungers, thirsts, and lies oppressed."⁴⁴ "Therefore the true church is hidden; it is banned, it is regarded as heretical, it is slain."⁴⁵

The cross is one of the "marks" of the true church.⁴⁶ In fact, there is no "more reliable sign" that it belongs to God than this. Whatever comes from God is rejected by the world, even His Son.⁴⁷ Therefore the cross is the "peculiar mark of faithful children of God."⁴⁸ The faithful bear "this name and title in the world."⁴⁹ If a man wishes to become "Christ's courtier," he "must wear the colors of the court." Christ issues no others.⁵⁰

The cross of persecution is a sure sign that the true gospel is being preached and heard. Where there is no persecution, it is not the gospel that is being preached.⁵¹ As long as the cross endures, it shall go well with the Christian cause.⁵² Luther quoted St. Hilary with approval and agreed that it is the nature of the church "to grow under adversity and to decrease in prosperity."⁵³ The church is in its "best state" when it is persecuted and in

⁴⁴ Lectures On Genesis, 1535-36, LW 1, p. 254.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 253.

⁴⁶ von Loewenich, pp. 170-172.

⁴⁷ Römerbrief, p. 133.

⁴⁸ Sermon On The Man Born Blind, LW 51, p. 42; Boehmer, Road To Reformation, pp. 147-148.

⁴⁹ Galatians, p. 430.

⁵⁰ Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, p. 199; Luther quotes St. Paul's frequent references to the "marks" of Christ, e.g. I Cor. 4:9, I Cor. 4:11 ff., II Cor. 6:4 ff., II Cor. 11:23 ff. (Galatians pp. 566-567)

⁵¹ Two Sermons At Weimar, The Second Sermon, LW 51, pp. 112-113.

⁵² Galatians, pp. 477-478.

⁵³ Psalm 1 LW 14, p. 305.

its "worst state" when "at ease." The "offense" of the cross must not be abolished, for the church "flourisheth" under it. When the cross is abolished and "all things are in peace," this is a sure sign that the pure preaching of the gospel has ceased.⁵⁴

The "more Christian" a man is the heavier the cross he will have to bear. Christ, "the first-born," bore the heaviest cross of all.⁵⁵

Luther's teaching on the cross of the Christian cannot be divorced from the fact that he reckoned with martyrdom in all earnestness from 1520 on. In those years he came to the conviction that "short of martyrdom, divine truth cannot triumph over this world of unrighteousness."⁵⁶

All who would belong to God "must truly suffer and endure mockery, shame, hurt, hatred, envy, defamation, fire, sword, death." In this context Luther quoted Acts 14:22, "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."⁵⁷ He emphasised the must, "it happens under no circumstances in any other way."⁵⁸ It is the way of "cross and death,"⁵⁹ "without which we cannot attain to glory."⁶⁰ Let no man try to get to heaven without following Christ's example. The cross prepares man for his "heritage."⁶¹

The cross can be borne only by the Christian who has the spirit of Christ.⁶²

⁵⁴Galatians, p. 477.

⁵⁵The Freedom Of A Christian, LW 31, p. 354.

⁵⁶Boehmer, Road To Reformation, pp. 371-372; Vogelsang, p. 13; von Loewenich, p. 164.

⁵⁷Psalm 118, LW 14, p. 58.

⁵⁸Römerbrief, p. 202.

⁵⁹Psalm 110, LW 13, p. 348.

⁶⁰see Vogelsang, p. 98.

⁶¹Sermon On The Man Born Blind, LW 51, pp. 39-41.

⁶²Concerning The Ministry, 1523, LW 40, pp. 28-29.

No one can mortify the flesh, bear the cross, and follow the example of Christ before he is a Christian and has Christ through faith in his heart as an eternal treasure. You don't put the old nature to death... through works, but through the hearing of the gospel. Before all other works and acts you hear the Word of God, through which the Spirit convinces the world of its sin. When we acknowledge our sin, we hear of the grace of Christ... Then you proceed to mortification and the cross.⁶³

The cross "immediately followeth" grace.⁶⁴ The response to grace in man, faith, is the "beginning of life," before the cross, but it "cannot be long without the cross."⁶⁵ After God gives man grace, He sends him the cross. If He did not do this, man's new state of grace might make him as presuming as he was before.⁶⁶ Through the cross, faith is "exercised"⁶⁷ and in this way "strengthened day by day."⁶⁸ The man of faith, Luther wrote in a striking figure, must hang on the cross so that he nowhere touches the earth for support.⁶⁹

Christ works grace for the inner man, and "cross, death, and hell for the outer man," so that the outer man may be mortified.⁷⁰ The gospel and

⁶³ Against The Heavenly Prophets, LW 40, pp. 148-149.

⁶⁴ Galatians, p. 477.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 461.

⁶⁶ Römerbrief, pp. 204-205.

⁶⁷ Psalms 111, LW 13, p. 379.

⁶⁸ Eight Sermons At Wittenberg, The First Sermon, 1522, LW 51, pp. 71-72.
⁶⁹ quoted by Fife, Robert H., The Revolt Of Martin Luther, New York, 1957, p. 233.

⁷⁰ Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 58, LW 31, pp. 212, 225.

faith would be "useless and in vain," if "mortification and crucifixion" of the old man did not follow.⁷¹ Luther wrote, "we must try the fight not without blood and wounds."⁷² Otherwise faith would simply drift into a new security.⁷³ This happens whenever faith does not "wrestle" against sin, but lives in security without conflict.⁷⁴ On the other hand, faith grows strong through the cross.⁷⁵

The cross of the Christian then has mortification as one of its effects.

The Lord

is the carpenter, and we are His lumber. The product is the dear, holy cross, which must follow the teaching of the gospel. Here He hews and works on us, planes and saws, that He may put to death the old man in us together with his learning, wisdom, and righteousness, and all his vices, thus making us perfect, His new creation. For this He must use large axes, hatchets, saws, and wedges; for the old Adam is a stubborn block and a scoundrel.⁷⁶

It is His own whom God "trains" through the cross.⁷⁷ Otherwise the gospel would make them "sleepy and secure," an unfortunately common state Luther observed. This misuse of the gospel "God cannot check except through suffer-

⁷¹Psalm 68, LW 13, p. 27.

⁷²Sermons ML, Ser. XXI, "Of Faith And Diffidence In Danger And Trouble," p.284.

⁷³Galatians, p. 400; Römerbrief, p. 144.

⁷⁴Galatians, p. 390.

⁷⁵Psalm 68, LW 13, p. 11; Römerbrief, p. 55.

⁷⁶Psalm 111, LW 13, p. 378.

⁷⁷Psalm 2, LW 14, pp. 320, 347; Römerbrief, pp. 324-325.

-ing," for "we are the kind of people" who cannot hold on to faith without the cross.⁷⁸

Through the cross God "dethrones" works and "crucifies" the old man, who is made proud by works.⁷⁹ Luther quoted John 3:7, "You must be born anew." "To be born anew, one must consequently first die and then be raised with the Son of Man."⁸⁰

Basic and important to Luther's teaching on the cross of the Christian was his insistence that it is not to be chosen. As we noted when discussing mortification,⁸¹ Luther opposed all "self-chosen putting to death of the flesh."⁸² There were those⁸³ who changed the words, "Blessed are those who are persecuted..." (Matt. 5:10) into "Blessed are those who seek persecution." Against their bringing suffering upon themselves, Luther wrote,

Not the sufferings that you think out yourself, but the suffering that comes upon you against your choice, thought, and desire, is the way of the cross, along which God leads you. There follow and be a willing pupil; that is the hour when your Master comes to you.⁸⁴

It must be a kind of cross the Christian "would gladly be rid of," which

⁷⁸Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, pp. 207-208.

⁷⁹Heidelberg Disputation, LW 31, p. 53; Galatians, pp. 530, 544.

⁸⁰Heidelberg Disputation, LW 31, p. 55; see also Römerbrief, pp. 512-513; 19; Galatians, p. 531.

⁸¹Pp. 28-30 above.

⁸²Against The Heavenly Prophets, LW 40, p. 81.

⁸³Eg. the Schwärmer.

⁸⁴Quoted in Boehmer, Luther, pp. 77-78.

comes upon him from without.⁸⁵ The Christian need not "look far about and seek the cross," it will soon enough "hang over his head."⁸⁶ Let it be a cross borne in the Lord's cause. Luther would unmask every "self-made cross" and all "self-tormenting." God does not desire that man choose ill-fortune. Christ did not seek the cross. Martyrdom lies in God's hands.⁸⁷

The cross can never be the work of man. Over against those who "seek" the cross, Luther "stands under it." While they praise the cross, he praises the grace of God. The cross as he understands it stands in opposition to all moralism.⁸⁸

In the same way that the cross cannot be self-chosen, it dare not be regarded as meritorious.⁸⁹ Although the Christian bears a cross, it is never "so exalted" that he can be saved by it.⁹⁰ The cross of the Christian "cancels no sins, does not win God's forgiveness, has no meritorious worth."⁹¹ Only the cross of Christ is meritorious, and to Him belongs the glory.⁹² Therefore Luther distinguished:

His is a heavenly suffering and ours is worldly...His suffering accomplishes everything, while ours does nothing except that we become conformed to Christ, and... therefore the suffering of Christ is the suffering of a

⁸⁵Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, p. 198; Vogelsang, p. 98.

⁸⁶Sermons ML, Ser. XXVIII, "The Difference Between The Law and The Gospel," pp. 354-355; Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, p. 199.

⁸⁷Vogelsang, pp. 9, 12.

⁸⁸von Loewenich, p. 163.

⁸⁹Galatians, p. 147.

⁹⁰Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, pp. 198-199.

⁹¹Vogelsang, pp. 56-57, 98; The Sermon On The Mount, LW 21, pp. 46-47.

⁹²Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, pp. 205-206.

Lord, whereas ours is the suffering of a servant.⁹³

Despite all appearances to the contrary, the cross does not "harm" the Christian, but "profits" him.⁹⁴ "In everything God works for good with those who love Him." (Rom. 8:28) Even the cross is compelled to "serve" the Christian and to work together with him for his salvation.⁹⁵ Therefore it is "small loss" for him to lose "property, honor, health, wife, child," his life, for he knows that God will help him "as He has always helped His own from the beginning of the world." Because he has not chosen his cross, he is confident of God's aid.⁹⁶

It seems to the man as though the cross were death, but in reality it is life. It seems to him that he is forsaken in the cross, but "precisely there" he is loved and cared for the most. "For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom He receives." (Heb. 12:6) Out of the cross, God produces salvation and "from death life." In this context Luther quoted II Corinthians 4:8-10, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies."⁹⁷

Because the gospel makes the first last and teaches humility and the cross, it destroys the strong. Those who desire to "be something in their own eyes and before men, those who consider themselves to be the first"

⁹³ Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, p. 208

⁹⁴ Psalm 111, LW 13, pp. 379-380.

⁹⁵ The Freedom Of A Christian, LW 31, pp. 354-355.

⁹⁶ Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, pp. 200, 204.

⁹⁷ Psalm 45, LW 12, p. 296.

shrink back from the cross, saying, "this is an hard saying." (John 6:60)⁹⁸
This is the difference between Christian suffering and that of others. They too have their "crosses," but they do not have the promises of God to turn the cross into good.⁹⁹ On the other hand, unlike the world which glories in "power, riches...honor...and its own righteousness," the Christian is able to glory in "tribulation, reproach, persecution, and death." For he knows that the cross is not his own, but that he bears it for Christ's sake.¹⁰⁰
He knows

that he possesses great wealth when he is poor, that he is a mighty prince and Lord when he lies in prison and superlatively strong when he is weak and sick, and that he is floating in honors when he is being covered with shame and ignominy.¹⁰¹

THE HUMBLD MAN,

THE MAN OF FAITH

The opus alienum Dei has as its purpose the man of humility or as we may also say the man of faith.¹ As we have noted, he is "God's handiwork." The opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei effect the mortification of the old man and the vivification of the new man. The man who has known the

⁹⁸ Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 63, LW 31, p. 232.

⁹⁹ Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, p. 201.

¹⁰⁰ Galatians, pp. 558-559; Römerbrief, pp. 512-513.

¹⁰¹ Second Sermon At The Funeral Of The Elector, Duke John Of Saxony, 1532,

¹ See Prenter, "Luther On Word And Sacrament," p. 69.

torments of the spiritual assault Luther termed Anfechtung, whom the law has "broken," and who has borne the weight of the cross of the Christian, God lifts and restores to life.

God is the God of the humble, the miserable, the afflicted, the oppressed, and the desperate, and of those that are brought even to nothing; and His nature is to exalt the humble, to feed the hungry, to give sight to the blind, to comfort the miserable and afflicted, to justify sinners, to quicken the dead, and to save the very desperate and damned.²

God wants only the sinner and the unworthy, because He can be efficacious only in him..This is the man who knows his need and therefore understands that only God's grace is capable of saving him.³ However the pride of the natural man will not let him be a sinner, and so God must first make him a sinner in His opus alienum. For God cannot give His righteousness to any one who is not unrighteous, i.e. who has not abandoned all righteousness of his own.⁴

By the opus alienum Dei the man of humility or faith is brought out of "deep darkness of heart" to self-knowledge and the conviction, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." (Psalm 51:4)⁵ He comes to know himself as a sinner and accursed.⁶ Luther wrote that God permits man to fall into sin, so that as fallen he may perceive his "ugliness."⁷

²Galatians, pp. 303-304.

³Vogelsang, pp. 31, 58; see Holl, Third Ed., pp. 30-31, 59 on the personal dimension in this judgment.

⁴Harnack, T., pp. 345-346.

⁵Galatians, p. 136.

⁶Ibid., p. 279.

⁷Römerbrief, p. 389

This self-knowledge leads to self-accusation and condemnation. Luther's classical formulation of this idea is "the just man is his own accuser."⁸ The world denies its sin, even defends it, while instead man should confess his sin and repent of it.⁹ The latter Luther called "to become a sinner," and by it he meant the destruction of the idea that man possesses any righteousness of his own. Man's righteousness must die and he "accuse, judge, condemn, and detest himself."¹⁰ In this way only can man become in his "self-judgment" what he is "before God."¹¹

Only when man has been brought to self-knowledge by the law, knowledge of the "judgment of God" on his sin, can true repentance follow.¹² Repentance and the forgiveness of sin belong together.¹³ Without repentance there can only be an "imagined faith."¹⁴ Luther wrote that the first elements of the Christian life are: repentance or "contrition and grief" over sin, and faith through which the forgiveness of sin is received and man is declared righteous before God.¹⁵ There cannot be one without the other.¹⁶ As we have already noted, the coming of grace and faith is accompanied by great inner turmoil.¹⁷ This is confession, the "chief work" of faith. In it man denies

⁸Letter To Spalatin, Feb. 15, 1518, WAB I, 144 ff. quoted in Fife, p. 259; Luther was struck by the Latin translation of Prov. 18:17, "Justus in principio est accusator sui." (Rupp, p. 118)
⁹Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, LW 22, p. 399.
¹⁰Römerbrief, p. 108.
¹¹Ibid., p. 102; Holl, Third Ed., pp. 92-93.
¹²Galatians, p. 136.
¹³Instructions For The Visitors Of Parish Pastors In Electoral Saxony, LW 40, p. 274.
¹⁴Ibid., pp. 276-277, 294; see also Holl, p. 112.
¹⁵Instructions For The Visitors Of Parish Pastors In Electoral Saxony, LW 40, p. 277.
¹⁶Ibid., p. 296.
¹⁷Defense And Explanation Of All The Articles, LW 32, p. 49.

himself as a kind of "dying" to himself, and confesses God.¹⁸

When this repentance does not continue together with faith, man imagine that they have

already obtained the forgiveness of sins, becoming thereby secure and without compunction of conscience.

This would be a greater error and sin than all the errors hitherto prevailing.¹⁹

Man is "always a sinner, always a penitent, always righteous." The starting point is sin and the final goal righteousness. Christians are the "middle" between them, "part sinner, part righteous, i.e. nothing other than penitents."²⁰

Thus the entire life of the Christian must be one of repentance,²¹ involving a change of heart which brings him to hate his sin. By such repentance the flesh is "mortified and crucified."²² The progression is from knowledge of sin, self-accusation, and repentance to hatred of self and despair of self.²³

This leads us to a central concept of Luther's Theology of the Cross, humility. As in so many other cases, it is a term in common theological usage to which Luther gave his own meaning. Humility was for Luther the unreserved submission of man to God, which looks for all good to come from Him

¹⁸ Römerbrief, p. 369; see also Sermon On St. Thomas's Day, LW 51, p. 22.

¹⁹ Instructions For The Visitors Of Parish Pastors In Electoral Saxony, LW 40, pp. 274, 276, 296.

²⁰ Römerbrief, pp. 400-402; see also Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 5, LW 31, p. 95.

²¹ Against Latomus, LW 32, p. 232.

²² Explanations Of The 95 Theses, Thesis 1, LW 31, pp. 83-84.

²³ Römerbrief, pp. 498-499, 330; Psalm 38, LW 14, pp. 169, 161-162; Boehmer, Road To Reformation, p. 133.

and which therefore "renounces all desire to be something and count for something" in itself.²⁴

Humility is the old monastic ideal made new by Luther. It is true he used it in its usual meaning as an ethical concept, but he clearly distinguished this use from humility as "lowliness and nothingness," i.e. as the renunciation of all piety and all virtuousness.²⁵ Luther came to the conclusion that the Scripture uses humility more often in this latter sense than in the former and this led him to break through the meaning humility possessed as a monastic ideal. The central meaning of it in his Theology of the Cross is "to become nothing, hungry, thirsty, dying." This nothingness can never be set before God as a merit, because it is really "nothingness" and only God's grace is honored.²⁶

Luther used the term humility then less often to mean a virtue than to mean the acknowledgment of sin or "accusatio sui." It is the essence of pride not to acknowledge its sin and therefore this superbia is the greatest evil of the Theology of the Cross. On the other hand, it is the essence of humility to acknowledge it and this humility is the goal of the Theology of the Cross.²⁷ Luther wrote that the "whole task" of the Apostle Paul and his Lord was to humble the proud and bring them to the acknowledgment of their need for grace.²⁸

Humility for Luther was always giving up any thought of having deserved anything from God, but rather knowing one has received all things without

²⁴Boehmer, Luther, pp. 268-269; see also Mackinnon, p. 224; Römerbrief, p. 265.

²⁵von Loewenich, pp. 175-177.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 178-179, 182-183.

²⁷Rupp, pp. 148-149, 167-168; von Loewenich p. 175.

²⁸Römerbrief, pp. 73-74.

any "merit or worthiness" on man's part.²⁹ He repudiated all outward show of humility, precisely because he conceived of it as the denial of any possibility of moral merit.³⁰ Therefore, Luther strongly condemned anyone who would consciously seek humility as a part of the quest for self-perfection. Such "self-perfection" was always a form of "self-poisoning" for Luther which could only lead to self-righteousness.³¹

Thus humility can never be the work of man. It is not a self-condemnation which can be effected by man's intensifying his endeavors to do so, but is rather a resignation to the judgment of God on his sin.³² Humility as a voluntary self-abasement, in Luther's eyes, would be

only a sham, artificial humility, the lying mask for the most dangerous variety of pride, spiritual pride.³³

The true, genuine humility is something entirely different, something which man cannot wring from himself by force__namely, the unconditional self-condemnation which comes over him against his will and intention, when in the hour of moral collapse the unerring judgment of God reaches him; for he cannot but recognize

²⁹Boehmer, Luther, p. 192.

³⁰Ibid., p. 193; see also The Magnificat, LW 21, pp. 316-317; Psalm 38, LW 14, p. 167.

³¹Boehmer, Luther, p. 225.

³²Holl, p. 111

³³Boehmer, Road To Reformation, pp. 145-146.

in his conscience the justness of that judgment, however he may kick against the pricks.³⁴

Therefore, humility, like faith, is never the work of man, cannot be "self-undertaken," but is always God-effected.³⁵ It is only God who reduces man's righteousness to nothing and makes him a "guilty sinner."³⁶

Humility and faith are very close in meaning in the Theology of the Cross. Luther often defined faith in a way that was virtually identical with the meaning he gave to humility. He could say that "Faith means to go to death," to become nothing, to have nothing other than God.³⁷ He could say that faith is to confess oneself guilty and as such is a kind of "dying."³⁸ Luther wrote that faith teaches humility in that it (faith) is "complete self-rejection and trust in God's grace." He defined humility in the same way.³⁹ In so far as humility precedes faith, it belongs to the "foundation" of faith. Only where this foundation has been laid can justification take place in faith. In this sense humility may be called, in von Loewenich's phrase, a "moment in faith" and Luther could say humilitas sola salvat.⁴⁰ Both humility and faith may be understood then as the renunciation of all piety and virtuousness based on the knowledge that man cannot stand before

³⁴Boehmer, Luther, p. 75.

³⁵Boehmer, Road To Reformation, p. 307; Pinomaa, p. 117; Holl, p. 120.

³⁶Psalm 118, LW 14, pp. 94-95.

³⁷Eg. faith is "to make a man nothing in his own eyes." Sermons ML, Ser.

XX, "Concerning Them That Are Under The Law, And Them That Are Under Grace," p. 247; see Holl, Third Ed. p. 33, footnote 4.

³⁸von Loewenich, pp. 97-98, 103, 108. In later years Luther defines faith less as an object of experience and turns his interest more to its "content."

³⁹Ibid., pp. 174-175.

⁴⁰WA 4.473.17 quoted in von Loewenich, p. 175

God with any righteousness of his own. In this and when Luther spoke of justification by humility, it is obvious that humility and faith were held in the closest possible connection by him.⁴¹

However, Luther's use of the term humility moved to the point where the word faith more adequately conveyed what he meant: the "emptying of the soul of all pride and self-righteousness," and a turning to God and a trust in His grace.⁴²

Humility is finally replaced by faith, not in the sense that the word drops out of Luther's vocabulary, or ceases to have meaning for him...but that the conception of man's passive waiting upon God is taken up into the word 'Faith,' as the means whereby man abandons his own self-righteousness and apprehends the righteousness of God.⁴³

This is to say that the content with which Luther filled the word humility in the early years of his Theology of the Cross was never lost, while the term was replaced by faith. This content was simply taken up as an important part of the meaning of the term faith as Luther used it. It is not difficult to understand that humility with all the coloring monasticism attached to it and with a meaning in common usage which was not Luther's meaning, proved to be a less suitable term than faith to convey his meaning.

Luther repeatedly quoted in this context, "The sacrifice acceptable to

⁴¹von Loewenich, pp. 175-177.

⁴²Rupp traces the movement from "accusatio sui" to "humilitas" to "humilitatio" to "fides." (Rupp, pp. 167-168) See also Boehmer, Luther, pp. 60-61; Road To Reformation, pp. 129-130.

⁴³Rupp, pp. 149-150.

God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (Ps. 51:17) Humility is this "great, broad, long, daily, and unending sacrifice."⁴⁴ The humble Christian accuses himself, confesses himself a sinner, and implores God's mercy. "He draws away from the righteousness and holiness in which the proud man wraps himself."⁴⁵ Humility "steps willingly into nothing" and confesses that it is of no worth. When this is done, man sees that all his good lies in God.⁴⁶

When man thus declines and becomes as nothing in all his power, works, and being, until there is nothing but a lost, condemned, and forsaken sinner, then divine help and strength appear.⁴⁷

If God is to come to man in grace, man's righteousness, however good it may appear to be, must become as nothing

'Through the law comes knowledge of sin' (Rom. 3:20), through knowledge of sin...comes humility, and through humility grace is acquired. Thus an action which is alien to God's nature results in a deed belonging to His very nature. He makes a man a sinner so that He may make him righteous.⁴⁸

The humility which pleases God is for man to know he is a sinner and to confess himself as such.⁴⁹ The man who has not been "brought low...takes credit

⁴⁴Psalm 118, LW 14, pp. 94-95.

⁴⁵Sermon On The Tenth Sunday After Trinity, LW 51, p. 16.

⁴⁶Römerbrief, pp. 369, 315, 299.

⁴⁷Psalm 6, LW 14, p. 142.

⁴⁸Heidelberg Disputation, LW 31, pp. 50-51

⁴⁹Psalm 90, LW 13, p. 110; Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, LW 22, p. 277.

for works...and does not give credit to God." Only the man who has "emptied himself" of his pride and his righteousness can look to God to do all things in him.⁵⁰ Man cannot come to Christ, until he becomes "his own enemy," considers himself unfit for good works, and is "thoroughly humiliated."⁵¹

The Christian life is one of "permanent" humility,⁵² sorrow for sin, and absolute dependence on God's grace. Self-distrust and anxiety over sin are always marks of the Christian, in contrast to the security which marks the proud who are smug in their own righteousness.⁵³

Humility necessitates man's giving up all righteousness of his own and every spiritual support which lends security to him and makes him sufficient in himself over against God. In the same way, humility involves man's abandoning every earthly support which would have the same effect.⁵⁴ Whenever man fears and trusts something other than God, he makes it into a god, whether this is one's money or one's cowl. Whoever loves life more than Christ has not yet come to true faith. "He who loves his life loses it." (John 12: 25) Only the man who no longer loves his life can really love God above all things.⁵⁵ Thus Luther could write that every one is quick to say he is a sinner, but no one is willing to "play the role" of sinner. By this he meant that if the humble Christian does not claim to be righteous, he must reject the honor and the possessions that belong to the righteous and take upon him

⁵⁰Heidelberg Disputation, LW 31, p. 55.

⁵¹Psalm 143, LW 14, p. 198; Psalm 38, LW 14, p. 166.

⁵²Holl, p. 120.

⁵³Mackinnon, p. 198.

⁵⁴Römerbrief, pp. 288-289.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 240-241, p. 282, see also pp. 3, 240, 288, 350-351, 353.

the "punishment" which belongs to sinners.⁵⁶ He wrote that this is part of what it means to be "buried with Christ" and to grow together into the image of His death. (Rom. 6:4,5) It is an idea he also found expressed in the words, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12:24) The humble Christian turns away from and is dead to all that "plays a role" in this life.⁵⁷

This brings us to a striking conception of Luther's early theology, the spiritual significance he gave to the "descent into hell." He taught that man is not humbled before God until he acknowledges God's judgment on his sin to be just, even if this means condemnation to hell. His phrase was "resignatio ad infernum."⁵⁸ Just as the man who really acknowledges himself to be a sinner must be willing to abandon the good things which belong to the righteous and take upon him what belongs to sinners, he must be willing to give himself into hell for the sake of God and His righteousness.⁵⁹ The "resignatio ad infernum" is the logical conclusion of Luther's Lectures On Romans, the argument of which is the destruction of all man's righteousness. The man who moves from self-knowledge, to self-accusation, to repentance, to despair and hatred of self, to humility, to abandoning all support in temporal things, comes finally to the acknowledgment of the justice of his own eternal condemnation. To accept this condemnation is to be stripped finally of all one's righteousness and is the rooting out of all pride and

⁵⁶Römerbrief, pp. 106; see also p. 293; Sermons On The Gospel Of St. John, LW 22, p. 291; Psalms 143, LW 14, p. 200; Galatians, p. 378.

⁵⁷Römerbrief, pp. 231-232; Psalms 68, LW 13, p. 15.

⁵⁸Rupp, pp. 146, 188.

⁵⁹Römerbrief, p. 332

self-love.⁶⁰

Christ is condemned and abandoned more than any one. In His human nature, He conducts Himself as a Man eternally damned to hell. In this His own must emulate Him, some more, others less.⁶¹ Were we to ask whether God ever wills that a man give himself to damnation, Luther would answer that the self-love which is so deeply ingrown in man can only be rooted out by utter self-abandonment. No one can ever know whether he loves God with a pure heart until he experiences renouncing his wish for salvation and being willing to be damned if God requires it.⁶²

The "resignatio ad infernum" is never something man can achieve for himself, is never a voluntary act, but is something which is God-effected. Its purpose is the same as that of all the opus alienum Dei, that man may submit unconditionally to His just judgment on his sin.⁶³ As striking a concept as it is, the "resignatio ad infernum" is consistent with Luther's teaching on justification as a whole, which begins with the knowledge and recognition of sin and ends with the acknowledgment of the justice of God's judgment on sin and which is a justification and a salvation that is the work of the grace of God alone.⁶⁴

The whole tenor of our discussion points to the fact that humility is a looking away from oneself and a looking to God. Man must "forget himself"

⁶⁰Rupp, p. 189.

⁶¹Römerbrief, p. 330; see also Vogelsang, pp. 69-70.

⁶²Römerbrief, p. 329.

⁶³Boehmer, Road To Reformation, p. 144; This concept fades into the background in Luther's later theology. (Rupp, p. 188) It is not so much that his view changes, as that the concept as such is not congenial to the later Luther and the term "resignatio" is no longer used.

⁶⁴Rupp, pp. 190-191.

and "empty" himself in that he no longer makes himself "equal to God" and instead leaves God's prerogatives to Him alone.⁶⁵ Luther had Christ saying, "Get out of yourself and come to Me," and this he described as "the great cross."⁶⁶ For no man can honor God and ascribe righteousness to Him, "unless he takes it from himself and ascribes to himself only sin."⁶⁷ Such a man knows he is "empty," "thirsty," "hungry," a "babe" before God.⁶⁸ The humble man abandons his own righteousness and is content to give nothing to God in exchange, but to receive salvation as God's free gift.⁶⁹ As it has been described here, "the consciousness of unrighteousness is an indispensable condition of justification."⁷⁰

Therefore Luther could write that it is not the holy, the wise, the learned among men who most easily fulfill this condition. They will not come to God empty-handed, but insist on bringing something with them. Simply because they have nothing to bring "the poor, miserable sinners, the downcast, the wanderers, the despised, the little people, and the unlearned accept Him joyfully and gladly."⁷¹ It is always the publican who is closer to grace than the Pharisee.

Humility alone leads man to seek his salvation outside himself in the grace and mercy of God.⁷² When man acknowledges himself to be a sinner, incapable of any good work, he "justifys" God, i.e. acknowledges Him as "right-

⁶⁵ Two Kinds Of Righteousness, LW 31, p. 302.

⁶⁶ Sermon On St. Matthew's Day, LW 51, pp. 29-31.

⁶⁷ Psalms 51, LW 14, pp. 173-174.

⁶⁸ Sermon On St. Matthew's Day, LW 51, p. 27; Psalms 6, LW 14, p. 141.

⁶⁹ Psalms 51, LW 14, p. 174.

⁷⁰ Mackinnon, pp. 189-190.

⁷¹ Psalms 118, LW 14, p. 96.

⁷² Mackinnon, pp. 195-196; Psalms 2, LW 14, p. 348.

eous alone."⁷³ Man may "embrace" the righteousness of God only when his own "glory" has grown speechless and God alone is glorified in him.⁷⁴

Man must become powerless that God may become strong in him.

Only those need the physician, who feel their need
(Matt. 9:12); only the sheep is sought, that is lost
(Lk. 15:4); freedom is given only to those who are
imprisoned (Lk. 4:18; Is. 61:1); only he will be over-
whelmed with riches, who is poor; only he will be of-
fered strength, who is weak; only he will be exalted,
who has been humbled (Lk. 1:52); only that which is
empty, will be satisfied with abundance, and comforted
only that which is low.⁷⁵

The humble Christian counts his own righteousness as nothing, attributes nothing to himself, makes nothing of himself and therefore lets God alone be wise and righteous.⁷⁶ Humility "magnifies and multiplies" the grace of God by magnifying and multiplying sin.⁷⁷ The humble Christian is always inwardly a sinner and therefore God justifies him. The proud are always inwardly righteous and therefore are always sinners before God.⁷⁸ The man who judges and condemns himself justifies God, i.e. declares His judgment on man's sin to be just, while the man who justifies himself judges and condemns God.⁷⁹

⁷³ Galatians, p. 131; Römerbrief, pp. 84-85, 105; Holl, p. 127.

⁷⁴ Römerbrief, p. 87.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 89-90.

⁷⁶ Sermon On St. Matthew's Day, LW 51, pp. 125-126; see also Römerbrief, pp. 87,

⁷⁷ 93, 147; Holl, p. 112.

⁷⁸ Psalm 51, LW 14, p. 166.

⁷⁹ Römerbrief, p. 160.

⁷⁹ Mackinnon, pp. 162-163; Galatians, p. 505.

God's judgment is that all men are sinners. The Christian must "give place" to this judgment in humility and acknowledge it as true and confess himself a sinner.⁸⁰ He must recognize his nothingness, claim nothing for himself, but instead give the glory to God and so be justified,⁸¹ i.e. "seeking all righteousness not in self but in God, always dissatisfied with himself and yearning for God, that is, humbly loving God and looking away from self."⁸² Such an humble and contrite sinner "grasps the hand of divine mercy, and is lifted up by it and restored."⁸³

The man who has learned to look away from himself is now free to look to God.⁸⁴ When man has been thoroughly humbled, he "sighs" to God for mercy. These are the "sighs too deep for words" (Rom. 8:26) "which pierce the clouds, and, as it were, compel the Divine Majesty to forgive and to save." When man reaches the point of crying out in this way, Luther wrote, "this is the climax of the drama which God enacts with us."⁸⁵ Because he is aware of his sin, the humble Christian implores God for healing. But he who does not possess such knowledge, does not implore God, and he who does not implore receives nothing and is not made righteous.⁸⁶ God forgives no one who is not "covered with sin" in this way.⁸⁷ This man is moved to say,

Who can give succour? For he...utterly despaireth of

⁸⁰Römerbrief, p. 103; Holl, p. 109.

⁸¹Sermon On The Tenth Sunday After Trinity, LW 51, p. 15; Galatians, p. 531.

⁸²Psalm 51, LW 14, p. 169; Mackinnon, p. 198; Römerbrief, p. 369.

⁸³Köstlin, op. cit., p. 60.

⁸⁴Psalm 143, LW 14, pp. 198-199; Römerbrief, p. 281.

⁸⁵Psalm 90, LW 13, pp. 110, 116-117; Römerbrief, p. 112.

⁸⁶Römerbrief, p. 138; see also pp. 153, 248, 174.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 178.

his own strength, he looketh about, and sigheth for
the help of a Mediator and Savior.⁸⁸

Then in his need he turns to God.

'Oh, my dear God, I have sinned, but I confess it to
Thee, I pour it out to Thee and pray Thee for help;
do Thou help me !' That is what God wants of us.⁸⁹

"God hears nothing more gladly than crying and thirsting for His mercy," but
only the "disconsolate" can utter it.⁹⁰

God is a merciful Father who gives His grace freely, without man in any
way deserving it. This is the basis for His glory. Because only the humble
Christian lets God give it "freely," he does not seek his own glory, but
gives the glory to God to whom it belongs.⁹¹ For man to be "silent" about
his righteousness is for him to glorify God.⁹²

It is God's

nature to make something out of nothing; hence one who
is not yet nothing, out of him God cannot make anything...
God accepts only the forsaken, cures only the sick, gives
sight only to the blind, restores life only to the dead,
sanctifies only the sinners, gives wisdom only to the
unwise... He has mercy only for those who are wretched,

⁸⁸Galatians, p. 136; see also p. 374; Römerbrief, pp. 306-307, 265.

⁸⁹Sermon On The Raising Of Lazarus, LW 51, p. 48.

⁹⁰Psalm 143, LW 14, p. 200.

⁹¹Galatians, pp. 131-132, 528, 531; see also The Magnificat, LW 21, p. 314.

⁹²Römerbrief, p. 129; see also pp. 378-380, 409-412, 502-503; Galatians,
pp. 221, 223, 227.

and gives grace only to those who are not in grace.⁹³

"This is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at My word." (Is. 61:2) "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (Ps. 51:17)⁹⁴

Everything else He despises except a heart that is humble and broken, for it ascribes honor to God and sin to itself. Such a heart gives God nothing but only takes from Him. This is also what God wants so that He may be truly God.⁹⁵

The only path to grace is the broken and contrite heart.⁹⁶ The man who refuses to be a sinner resists the grace of God⁹⁷ while "God saves only the sinner...makes...only the dead alive."⁹⁸ God cannot be efficacious, cannot be the "Savior" of the man who will not be condemned by his sin. He can be God only to the man who is "nothing." Out of him, He can make something.⁹⁹

He wants to be a God and Savior of the weak, the unwise, the insignificant, the miserable and afflicted poor sinners who certainly need such a God and Savior. This He does in order to make them strong while they are weak, righteous and joyful while they are convinced

⁹³ Psalm 38, LW 14, p. 163.

⁹⁴ Römerbrief, pp. 322-323, 268-269.

⁹⁵ Psalm 51, LW 14, p. 174; see also Römerbrief, pp. 400-402; Galatians, p. 304; Psalm 6, LW 14, p. 145.

⁹⁶ Psalm 51, LW 14 p. 168.

⁹⁷ Römerbrief, p. 378.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 202; see also p. 172; Vogelsang, p. 31.

and frightened by sin, alive and blessed while they suffer and die; as He says (II Cor. 12:9) 'My power is made perfect in weakness.'¹⁰⁰

God "gives grace to the humble," (I Pet. 5:5) and "whoever humbles himself will be exalted." (Matt. 23:12)¹⁰¹ Because the humble man does not lift himself proudly against God, but acknowledges his sin "with a broken and contrite heart" and trusts solely in Christ, God spreads over him "an infinite heaven of grace."¹⁰² "Though the Lord is high, He regards the lowly; but the haughty He knows from afar." (Ps. 138:6) The man who sets himself beside God in his pride, God overlooks, to regard the humble man, who in the knowledge of his sin and unworthiness, retires far off from Him.¹⁰³ God passes by the "greatest" among men and takes the weakest and the humblest, for He is a God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist." (Rom. 4:17)

He proves it with the grain in the field; unless it 'falls into the earth and dies...it remains alone.' (John 12:24) But if it dies, rots, and loses its husk and flour in the earth, it grows roots, blade and ear and 'bears much fruit'...it is God's nature to show His majesty and power through...weakness.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Psalm 110, LW 13, p. 253; see also Römerbrief, p. 208.

¹⁰¹ Heidelberg Disputation, LW 31, pp. 50-51.

¹⁰² Galatians, pp. 516-517; see also Römerbrief, pp. 136, 171.

¹⁰³ Sermon On The Tenth Sunday After Trinity, LW 51, p. 14; see also The Magnificat, LW 21, p. 314

¹⁰⁴ Psalm 8, LW 12, p. 112.

The humble man, who has been made guilty, whose own righteousness has vanished, and who has been brought to a knowledge of the wrath of God, becomes "thirsty" and "more apt to receive the grace" of God.¹⁰⁵

Like as...the dry earth coveteth the rain...troubled hearts thirst after Christ...to them He is joy, consolation, and life...indeed Christ requireth thirsty souls...He delighteth to water these dry grounds. He poureth not His waters upon fat and rank ground, or such as is not dry, and coveteth no water. His benefits are inestimable, and therefore He giveth them to none but unto such as have need of them and earnestly desire them.¹⁰⁶

No one can be filled with the righteousness of God who has not become "hollow" and "empty" of his own righteousness.

O how we wish with all our hearts to be empty, that You may be full in us! Gladly am I weak, that Your strength may live in me! Gladly am I a sinner, that You may be justified in me! Gladly am I foolish, that You may be my wisdom! Gladly am I unrighteous, that You may be my righteousness!¹⁰⁷

This "longing and yearning" for grace must continue as long as the Christian lives. The humble man who acknowledges his inability to save himself, despairs of himself, and seeks the grace of God makes "the best preparation

¹⁰⁵Galatians, pp. 320, 323-324.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 318.

¹⁰⁷Römerbrief, pp. 90-91.

for grace."¹⁰⁸ In this way Luther could speak of humility as a kind of "pre-disposition for grace."¹⁰⁹

To such a man, "it is not possible that God will deny His grace."¹¹⁰ For Christ came "to seek and save the lost." (Lk. 19:10)¹¹¹ He did not come to break the bruised reed, nor to quench the smoking flax but to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the contrite in heart, to preach remission to the captives.¹¹²

RECAPITULATION

There emerges from our study the striking image of the God who kills and makes alive. He is a God of love and mercy but because of the presence of sin in the world, He must always stand over against it in wrath as well as in grace. In His holiness He cannot but hate and expose sin. His wrath is directed against sin wherever it is to be found, whether in the unbeliever or the believer. This is to say that because sin is never fully eradicated in this life even the believer must live under the wrath as well as the grace of God.

His wrath and grace are expressed in the opus alienum and the opus

¹⁰⁸ Sermon Preached In The Castle At Leipzig, 1519, LW 51, pp. 58-59; see also Heidelberg Disputation, LW 31, p. 52; Psalm 51, LW 14, p. 166; Galatians, pp. 303-304.

¹⁰⁹ Rupp, pp. 148-150.

¹¹⁰ Sermon Preached In The Castle At Leipzig, LW 51, pp. 58-59

¹¹¹ Galatians, pp. 449-450.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 303-304.

proprium Dei. The former is directed against the man who must die. For Luther this is always the man of pride and security. Sin is the wrong relationship to God; individual sins are simply symptoms of the basic wrong. This wrong relationship exists whenever man in his pride refuses to be God's creature and instead makes himself into a god. He does this when he renounces his need for God by refusing to receive from Him and insisting on giving to Him instead. In his pride man presumes to be his own justifier and savior on the basis of his works of righteousness. This is to make God unnecessary and to displace Him altogether. Therefore the opus alienum Dei must shatter this pride and unsettle this security of man in his own righteousness. Only when this has been effected can God come to His opus proprium of grace and forgiveness.

Luther used the scholastic term for the effect of this work of God's: mortification. However, for Luther, this mortification by which the "old man," the man of pride and security, is destroyed, is always the work of God. In this way he gave the term a meaning which is in sharp contrast to its use in monasticism. His experience of mortification as the work of man in monasticism was the basis for his strong insistence that the means of mortification are never to be chosen and are in no way meritorious. Mortification can never be the work of man, seeking some form of self-perfection, but is always the work of God.

Because the old man of pride and security continues side by side with the new man God creates through His opus proprium, the opus alienum must continue to effect mortification throughout the life of the Christian. The two "works" of God exist side by side in the Christian and there must take

place a daily mortification of the old man and a daily vivification of the new man.

The opus alienum Dei effects mortification through Anfechtung, the law, and the cross of the Christian. Anfechtung comes to the Christian as God's "trial" of faith. While there are physical Anfechtungen, the most difficult are the spiritual: the Anfechtungen of unworthiness (sin) and of salvation (election). Faith is "tried," for these are deep searching doubts that lead man to question his state of grace. As such they are unsettling to any pride and security which may arise in man. The law reveals his sin to man, creates a sense of guilt, and teaches him he cannot justify himself, in this way destroying his pride and security in his own righteousness. The cross of the Christian, borne in following the example of Christ, is a cross of persecution which takes place wherever the gospel is truly preached and the Christian life truly lived. It places the Christian under the scandalum of the cross, despised and rejected by the world, and in thus making him lowly destroys his pride and security.

The purpose of the opus alienum Dei is a new man, the man of humility and faith. Man is made a sinner, i.e. all supports which would make it possible for him to believe himself anything else are one by one shattered and destroyed. He is emptied of all presumption of his own righteousness and taught to look away from himself and to God for the only help there is.

The opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei in Luther's theology comprise, in a phrase of Böhler's, "the dialectic of the Christian life."¹

¹Böhler, pp. 189-190.

Because the Christian remains "old man" and "new man" as long as this earthly life continues, pride and security must die together with the "old man" of which they are characteristics. For pride and security are quite as dangerous in the life of the Christian who has once received grace as they are in the life of the unbeliever who has not yet received it.

Even in the Christian the opposites are still pride and humility or faith, and security and daily contrition. His pride which would justify and save man on the basis of his own righteousness must die. This "dying" effects humility or faith which is the emptying of man of all personal righteousness and his trusting only in the alien righteousness of God. Pride is sufficient in itself, in its own righteousness, and therefore makes the grace of God unnecessary and robs Him of His glory. It must die and be replaced by humility or faith which in "lowliness" and "nothingness" deeply feels the need for God's grace. It is therefore a matter of personal righteousness over against a deep-felt need for the grace of God.

Human pride is marked by a security which is a kind of smugness in one's own righteousness, a sureness and sufficiency in oneself over against God. The man of humility or faith "dies" precisely to this sureness and sufficiency in himself and is daily contrite, sorrows over his sin, despairs of himself and therefore feels acutely the need for God's grace.

Thus faith is never, as Luther put it, a state of being, but is always in the process of becoming. It is a work God has begun, but not completed; a process that is not yet finished, but that is actively going on. The Christian lives always between hope and despair. The "old man" who is in him can only despair, while the "new man" who is growing in him day by day looks to God in hope and trust. Thus "the dialectic of the Christian life" is a daily

death/life.

The Christian is "always a sinner, always a penitent, always righteous," living in anxiety about sin and moving again and again through the opus alienum to the opus proprium Dei. Just as day and night follow one another, the wrath and the grace of God are operative in the Christian's life. Again and again he must be crushed by the opus alienum Dei so that he may come to contrition and thus to faith and grace again.

Daily the old man must die and daily the new man be revived. Daily there must be, to paraphrase a statement of Luther's, some time the opus alienum and some time the opus proprium Dei. Thus the Christian must die a little at a time to give "place" and make "room" for a growing new life in Christ.

PHILIPP MELANCHTHON

(1497-1560)

AND LUTHERAN ORTHODOXY

PHILIPP MELANCHTHON

AND LUTHERAN ORTHODOXY

The rich doctrine of mortification and the opus alienum Dei which may be discovered in Luther's writings underscored the initiative of God as the One who kills and who makes alive. Luther spoke as one who had experienced both the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei in fullest measure. In his own creative understanding he maintained the dialectical tension between the wrath of God/love of God, opus alienum/opus proprium Dei, old man/new man, death/life. The pride of the old man by which he would become his own God must daily die, so that the new man in Christ may daily arise. This daily opus alienum Dei is effected through Anfechtung, the law, and the cross of the Christian. The old man dies and through His opus proprium God creates a new man. This we described above as "the dialectic of the Christian life," simul justus et peccator.

However, the distinctive features of Luther's theology in this regard did not long endure. It now becomes our task to determine when and in what way the "new wine" was lost. When the attempt is made to answer this question, it readily becomes apparent that much of Luther's theology was never taken up by Lutheran Orthodoxy and that significant departures were taken from his position very early. The key personality here was Philipp Melancthon who stood in a unique way between Luther and the second generation of Lutheran theologians. To his work we must now turn.

The Epigone were not their master's metal. They could not maintain the

prophetic cast of his thought.

Since Karl Holl¹ it has come to be more and more clearly seen that Lutheran Orthodoxy was the child of the spirit of Melanchthon,² who "passed Luther's ideas through the sieve of his formulations."³

Near the end of Luther's life and particularly after his death the emphasis shifted from the discovery of the great new creative insights of the Reformation to the task of finding forms and formulae for their permanent embodiment. To Melanchthon fell this task of formulating and systematizing the teachings of Luther. His gifts were very different from his master's. He was not so much a creative thinker as a school-master. His skill lay in precise definition, in harmonizing the Reformation insights with knowledge in other fields, and in putting them into text-book form.

Thus after the original spirit of the Reformation died away, it was the Praeceptor Germaniae who laid down the lines for the doctrinal development of the Lutheranism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thousands of students sat at his feet and scores went out annually into the pulpits of

¹Although certainly clearly understood by A. Ritschl before him.

²Holl, K. "Die Rechtfertigungslehre in Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Frage der Heilsgewissheit," Luther, pp. 126-129, quoted in Pelikan, Jaroslav From Luther To Kierkegaard, St. Louis, Missouri, 1950, p. 26; Bornkamm, Heinrich "Philipp Melanchthon" Das Jahrhundert der Reformation, Göttingen, 1961, p. 67; Hildebrandt, Franz Melanchthon: Alien or Ally?, Cambridge, 1946, pp. xi, xii; Pauck, Wilhelm "Luther and Melanchthon," Luther and Melanchthon, Ed. Vilmos Vajta, Philadelphia, 1961, p. 14.

³Troeltsch, E. Vernunft und Offenbarung bei Johann Gerhard und Melanchthon, Göttingen, 1891, p. 58, quoted in Pauck, "Luther and Melanchthon," p. 13, see also pp. 20-21; Seeberg, Reinhold Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, E.T. Text-Book of the History of Doctrines, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1952, pp. 347-348, 363-364; Bornkamm, H. "Philipp Melanchthon," p. 61, "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," Das Jahrhundert der Reformation, p. 78; Aulen, Gustaf Christus Victor, E.T. Hebert, A. G., New York, 1951, pp. 123-126.

Germany.⁴ They learned their theology with his loci communes as their textbook.⁵

In fact it is not too much to say that the great doctrinal controversies of sixteenth century Lutheranism were largely caused by differences in emphasis between Luther and his great disciple. The Formula of Concord is generally interpreted as the defeat of Melanchthon and the victory of "true" Lutheranism through the work of Martin Chemnitz, yet even here his "errors" were described and refuted utilizing his theological method and his terminology.⁶

When during nearly a half century of stormy controversy Lutheranism continued the task of defining its theological heritage, it used the tools which Melanchthon had given it. The result may be fairly described as a "Melanchthonian Lutheranism."⁷

The great "prophetic" age of the reformation was followed by a "didactic" age.⁸ It was not so much that Melanchthon took exception to Luther's

⁴Bornkamm, "Philipp Melanchthon," pp. 59-63, 68; Richard, J. W., The Confessional History Of The Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, 1909, pp. 11, 344-345; Seeberg, p. 363.

⁵On his famous Loci communes rerum Theologicarum, perhaps best translated, "Basic Concepts of Theology," see Bornkamm, "Philipp Melanchthon," p. 58; Pauck, "Luther and Melanchthon," p. 13; Schmauk, T. E. and Benze, C. T., The Confessional Principle And The Confessions Of The Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, 1911, pp. 573-574; Neve, J. L., A History Of Christian Thought, I, Philadelphia, 1946, pp. 257-258; McGiffert, A. C., Protestant Thought Before Kant, New York, 1951, pp. 74-75; Lentz, Harold H., Reformation Crossroads, A Comparison Of The Theology Of Luther And Melanchthon, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1958, p. 4.

⁶Pelikan, From Luther To Kierkegaard, pp. 45-48; Ritschl, Albrecht, Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung, I, E. T. The Christian Doctrine Of Justification And Reconciliation, by Black, J. S., Edinburgh, 1872, pp. 231-232.

⁷Seeberg, p. 381.

⁸Ibid., pp. 363-364.

teaching as that changes in emphasis began to take place. Melanchthon began to strike out on paths of his own. As time went on, he departed more and more from the dominance of the thought-forms of Luther. Here the many changes in the subsequent editions of his loci of 1521 indicate his growing independence.⁹

The crucial place at which his immediate followers failed to understand Luther was his rediscovery of the Biblical realism regarding the rapprochement between God and man. In this he maintained (a) the sole initiative of God who (b) conforms man to the death and resurrection of His Son, the objective and subjective halves of his profound dialectic. The need to maintain both halves in an indissoluble unity he had learned in his decade and a half long monastic struggle and in the bitter experiences of the mid-1520 s.¹⁰ The rapprochement between God and man takes place only through His Word, but it is a genuine encounter with the living,

⁹The loci is said to have gone through fifty editions during his lifetime. Two entirely new prints took place in 1525 and 1543. During Luther's conflict with Erasmus (1523), there appeared a growing inclination in Melanchthon to return to some of the ideals of humanism. It was however particularly in the edition of 1535 and thereafter that a growing difference between Luther and himself came to the fore. In this edition for the first time he recognized three causes of conversion: the Word, the Holy Spirit, and the human will. Later (1548) Melanchthon acknowledged he had abandoned the position of Luther on many articles of doctrine and that some of his views were more nearly like those of Erasmus. These changes in his position he introduced into subsequent editions of the loci. These later editions were really of greater historical significance than the early ones as a result. They were less critical of scholasticism, more respectful of the Fathers, and show Melanchthon's deepening appreciation of the role of philosophy in relation to theology. See here, Schmauk, pp. 573-574; Neve, I, pp. 257-258.

¹⁰With the spiritualism of the Enthusiasts.

personal God.¹¹ The encounter is a meeting between persons.

If Luther was to be followed, the dialectical element in this could not be removed. It is a mark of scholastic schemes that they smooth over the paradoxical and remove the dialectical tension to arrive at a more "rational" statement.¹² The same was true of Melancthon's schematization of Luther's thought. His dialectic was dismantled, its unity destroyed. The dialectic unity of the formal principle (sola scriptura) of the reformation and the material principle (sola fide) was sundered;¹³ as was the unity of justification and sanctification;¹⁴ the unity of the "forensic" and the "dynamic" or "effective" aspects of justification;¹⁵ and the unity of "Christus pro nobis" and "Christus in nobis."¹⁶

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- ¹¹Prenter, Spiritus Creator, p. 88; Pauck, Wilhelm, The Heritage Of The Reformation, Rev. Ed., New York, 1961, pp. 206-207. The German title of E. Brunner's Wahrheit als Begegnung, E. T. The Divine-Human Encounter, by Loos, A. W., Philadelphia, 1943, expresses this very clearly.
- ¹²Aulen, Gustaf, The Faith Of The Christian Church, E. T. by Wahlstrom, E. H. and Arden, G. E., Philadelphia, 1948, pp. 103-104.
- ¹³Tillich, Paul, A History Of Christian Thought, unpublished manuscript recorded and edited by John, P. H., Second Ed., New York, 1956, p. 229; Braaten, D. E., "Correlation Of Justification And Faith In Evangelical Dogmatics," The New Community In Christ, Eds. Burtness, J. H. and Kildahl, J. P., Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1963, pp. 110-111.
- ¹⁴Küstlin, Luthers Theologie, II, 444 sq, quoted in Schaff, Philip, The Creeds Of Christendom, I, New York, 1881, p. 272; Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 62, 96; Köberle, Adolf, Rechtfertigung und Heiligung, E. T. The Quest For Holiness, by Mattes, J. C., Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1938, footnote 12, pp. 92-94; Stupperich, Robert, "Die Rechtfertigungslehre bei Luther und Melancthon 1530-1536," Luther and Melancthon, Ed. Vajta, Vilmos, Philadelphia, 1961, p. 85.
- ¹⁵Hildebrandt, p. 51; Haikola, Lauri, "Melancthon's und Luthers Lehre von der Rechtfertigung," Luther and Melancthon, Ed. Vajta, Vilmos, Philadelphia, 1961, p. 103.
- ¹⁶Hildebrandt, pp. 45-46; Brunner, p. 29. E.g. justification was defined so forensically that it was necessary for later Orthodoxy to introduce the unio mystica into its ordo salutis as a separate stage in the process to compensate, as it were, for what had been lost. Tillich, A History Of Christian Thought, p. 232.

Melanchthon chose the "objective" half of the dialectic. The more he sought to guard the sola gratia, the more he felt compelled to exclude all subjective factors from the reception of grace. Thus justification became something objective, transcendent, occurring altogether outside of man.¹⁷ This "objective" event was described in the Bible and formulated into doctrines by the Church. Therefore faith came more and more to be interpreted as acceptance of authoritative doctrinal propositions and assensus was made primary to the other aspects of faith.¹⁸ Faith became little more than "to-hold-for-true,"¹⁹ a limitation Luther could never have accepted.²⁰

This cannot be separated from the fact that Melanchthon had known no experience similar to Luther's religious struggle in the monastery. He came to the reformation out of his humanistic studies in the classics.²¹

When it is remembered that the reformation took its beginnings in Luther's inner struggle for the assurance of forgiveness, fought out in

¹⁷Haikola, p. 94; Seeberg, pp. 359-361; Stupperich, pp. 80, 82; Hildebrandt, pp. 53-54; Tillich, Paul, Systematic Theology, II, Chicago, 1951, pp. 178-179; Prenter, Spiritus Creator, p. 62; Braaten, pp. 98-99.

¹⁸Given as notitia and fiducia by the Orthodox theologians. Aulen, The Faith Of The Christian Church, pp. 74-75; Köberle, pp. 76-77, 80-81; Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 31-32, 102-103, 154; Dillenberger, John and Welch, Claude, Protestant Christianity, New York, 1954, pp. 84-85.

¹⁹von Loewenich, Walter, Die Geschichte der Kirche, Witten-Ruhr, 1957, p. 292; Seeberg, p. 356; Pelikan, From Luther To Kierkegaard, pp. 33-35.

²⁰Bornkamm, "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," pp. 77-78. This may be seen very clearly in the Osiandrian Controversy. As Melanchthon emphasized the "objective," "forensic" aspect of Luther's position, Osiander emphasized the subjective, "dynamic" side as a corrective. Neither man grasped Luther's whole view. Hildebrandt, pp. 45-46, 50-55; Köberle, footnote 12, pp. 92-94; Schmauk, footnote 16, p. 16.

²¹Schmauk, pp. cxvi-cxvii, 627; McGiffert, p. 74; Lentz, pp. 79-80; Bornkamm, "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," p. 76; Zeeden, E. W., Martin Luther und die Reformation im Urteil des deutschen Luthertums, I, E. T. The Legacy Of Luther, London, 1954, p. 34.

the depths of his being, it is apparent that this consideration is not unimportant. There is a sense in which Luther's followers never fully understood the impact which his experience of the gospel had made on him. The peace which Luther had found only as "the answer to a sum," in Bonhoeffer's phrase,²² was "inborn" in them.²³

Justification by faith was for Luther a personal experience, which he was driven by conscience to publish. His followers seized upon the principle, expanded it into a doctrine, and imposed on the faithful literal acceptance: living experience became dogmatic theology.²⁴

Justification as the reassuring ground of personal salvation became merely one of the doctrines in the system which one could know (notitia) and assent to (assensus) without personally experiencing. The individual's assurance of salvation became a logical inference from the reine Lehre.²⁵ In this way justification by faith came to mean that a man acknowledges as objectively valid the Scriptural teachings concerning the work of Christ for him.²⁶

What was lost by this "objective" and intellectualized view of faith was the sense of the "immediacy" of the work of God as opus alienum and opus proprium.²⁸ Luther understood this as a real work of God taking place in a first-

²² Bonhoeffer, The Cost Of Discipleship, p. 43.

²³ Elert, Werner, Morphologie des Luthertums, I, pp. 44-52, quoted in Pelikan, From Luther To Kierkegaard, p. 70; Pauck, The Heritage Of The Reformation, pp. 168-169.

²⁴ Zeeden, I, p. 34.

²⁵ Braaten, p. 111.

²⁶ Pelikan, From Luther To Kierkegaard, pp. 42-43.

²⁷ Tillich, A History Of Christian Thought, p. 229.

²⁸ Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 186-187, 224.

hand, personal rapprochement of God and man. The opus alienum Dei really kills the old man and His opus proprium really gives life to the new man. "This is quite different from maintaining that we merely believe that the old man is dead in Christ and the new man lives in Christ."²⁹ As Haikola has pointed out, the wrath of God and the law are not simply ideas. They are living realities which tyrannize the sinner. They must be conquered in his personal life. Where Christ's work is appropriated, He is really present to conquer his enemies. He is never simply the content of a doctrine.³⁰ Luther described a first hand, personal encounter between Christ and man through the Word. This Melanchthon understood rationally, not dynamically. In his view all the action took place at a distance (forensically) and needed only to be appropriated by the individual.

It was in this direction the "objectification" of the reformation theology proceeded.

DIFFERING MOTIVATIONS

Melanchthon's divergence from Luther must also be understood in terms of the different motivations and goals which underlay their work. As early as 1520 Melanchthon wrote:

There are chiefly two blessings that commend Christ
unto the world: a conscience at peace and a mind in

²⁹Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 101.

³⁰Haikola, p. 103; Prenter, Spiritus Creator, p. 184.

control of the passions.¹

Reversing them: (a) his anxiety lest the Reformation mean the end of civilization as the old fabric of religious and moral education was swept away and men sank into Barbarei; and (b) his longing for peace of conscience (for Trost, consolation) firmly grounded on so "objective" a ground it could never be questioned.² What he saw during the visitation of the churches, 1523-1529, led him to fear the dissolution of the whole Latin-Christian order of the west with its cultural heritage.³ The appalling ignorance of the people also dictated the paedagogical requirements of the day and gave Lutheran Orthodoxy its didactic form.⁴ No one should fail to credit the Praeceptor Germaniae for his great service to the Reformation in the sphere of education.⁵ However in such an historical setting indoctrination became very important,⁶ and the "reine Lehre" became the chief characteristic of the Church.⁷

¹ Melanchthon, Philipp "Paul And The Scholastics" (1520) E.T. Melanchthon: Selected Writings, by Hill, C.L., Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1962, p. 42.

² See Bornkamm, "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons" p. 78.

³ Pauck, "Luther and Melanchthon," p. 29; see also "Paul And The Scholastics" (1520), pp. 33-34; Melanchthon, Philipp Loci communes (1555), etwa von Dr. Justus Jonas in deutsche Sprache gebracht, aber im Jahre 1555 wiederum durchgesehen von Philipp Melanchthon, Philipp Melanchthons Werke, Vierter Theil, herausgegeben von Dr. F.A. Koethe, Leipzig, 1829, pp. 324, 351; Hildebrandt, pp. 34-35; Bornkamm, "Philipp Melanchthon," pp. 60-62, "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," pp. 79, 85.

⁴ Pauck, "Luther and Melanchthon," pp. 17-18, 20-21, The Heritage Of The Reformation, pp. 129-130; Bornkamm, "Philipp Melanchthon," pp. 66-67; Manschreck, C.L. Melanchthon The Quiet Reformer, New York, 1958, pp. 131, 132, 145; Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 238-240; Cass, W. Geschichte der Protestantischen Dogmatik, I, Berlin, 1854, p. 180.

⁵ Bornkamm, "Philipp Melanchthon," pp. 59-63, 68.

⁶ Pelikan, From Luther To Kierkegaard, pp. 27-28; Seeberg, pp. 355-356; and Luther was "subordinated to his doctrine." Zeeden, I, pp. 46, 58; Schmauk, pp. 601-603, 841.

⁷ Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 238-240, 296 footnote 2; Seeberg, pp. 354, 356-358, 363; Dillenberger and Welch, pp. 80-81; Pauck, The Heritage Of The Reformation, p. 50.

Quite literally Melanchthon feared that the new found liberty of the gospel would be abused by the people as an "occasion for the flesh."⁸ He wanted to see peace and good order maintained at all costs and the "devilry of the mob" restrained. He feared the Barbarei which he found among the people, especially in Germany.⁹ In this period of spiritual and political turmoil, he sought to repair some of the breaches he saw opening in the fabric of the empire. In doing so he fell back on his earliest knowledge. He hoped by paedagogy, derived from the philosophy of antiquity, to provide guides for conduct which would bring controls and stability to the social order once again.¹⁰

When the visitations disclosed the ignorance of the people, catechisms were everywhere produced by the evangelicals and preaching was made as doctrinal and didactic as possible.¹¹ Melanchthon sought to build a bridge between Church and school. His work inaugurated a new era in German education and endured.¹²

The grand nephew of Reuchlin came to the Reformation with "classic ancestry" in his veins.¹³ He was and remained an Erasmian Humanist who took his psychological and ethical conceptions from "antik" philosophy and sought to fill them with evangelical experience.¹⁴

⁸Hildebrandt, pp. 34-35.

⁹Loci communes, 1555, pp. 324, 351.

¹⁰Bornkamm, "Philipp Melanchthon," pp. 60-61.

¹¹Pauck, The Heritage Of The Reformation, pp. 129-130.

¹²Manschreck, pp. 131, 132, 145.

¹³Schmauk, pp. 610-611; Pauck, "Luther And Melanchthon," pp. 14-15; Manschreck, pp. 13, 82.

¹⁴Schmauk, p. 619 footnote 18; Pauck, "Luther And Melanchthon," pp. 14-19, 22; Bornkamm, "Philipp Melanchthon," pp. 67-68; "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," pp. 71-72; McGiffert, p. 75; Manschreck, pp. 82, 96; Hildebrandt, pp. 1, 3, 17.

In opposition to Luther's position on total depravity and the bondage of the will, Melanchthon favored the more optimistic view of Erasmian humanism which laid greater emphasis on human worth and the powers latent in man.¹⁵

His paedagogical program was "through knowledge to piety."¹⁶ Revelation addressed itself to man's reason. When the mind was assured that the gospel was true, this certainty was communicated to the whole man.¹⁷ In the same way, natural theology prepared the way for revelation, the latter does not contradict but supplements it.¹⁸ Thus there followed his reintroduction of Aristotelian philosophy which blunted the edge of Luther's theology and rationalized it. Luther had fought so vigorously against Aristotle precisely because he believed his philosophical categories transformed and corrupted the Biblical faith.¹⁹

Melanchthon's fear of the Barbarei which he felt society had been left

¹⁵He sought to maintain the priority of grace in Luther's thought and yet affirm the more dignified concept of man found in humanism. Dillenberger and Welch, p. 82; Bornkamm, "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," pp. 70, 73, 83, 87. In this connection also must be seen his famous formulation of de tribus causis efficientibus (Word, Spirit, and the assent of man), Küberle, pp. 140-141.

¹⁶Melanchthon, Philipp, Loci communes (1521), E. T. Hill, C. L., Boston, 1944, translator's introduction, p. 42.

¹⁷Pelikan, From Luther To Kierkegaard, pp. 27-28; Lentz, pp. 79-80; Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 368; Richard, p. 542; Gass, I, pp. 180-181.

¹⁸Bornkamm, "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," p. 82, citing CR XIII, pp. 150 f.; Gass, I, pp. 181-182.

¹⁹Tillich, A History Of Christian Thought, p. 228; Bornkamm, "Philipp Melanchthon," pp. 66-67, "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," pp. 69, 76-77, 80-81, 83; Gass, I, pp. 179-180; Pelikan, From Luther To Kierkegaard, pp. 33, 54-55; Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 6-7; Seeberg, p. 353; Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 124.

open to by the reformation gave substance to his ideal of Beredsamkeit, "learned piety."²⁰ This moralistic definition of religion and his hope for moral reformation in society were common to all the humanists.²¹

Luther had known the same tumultuous times, felt the same fear of Barbarei, but he had no confidence in the humanistic ideals for education as their answer. The only answer he knew lay in the gospel. Therefore he could not share the hopes Melanchthon held together with Erasmus.²²

It is true Melanchthon tended to regard the Church as a school and to emphasize the teaching aspects of the pastoral office. His interest was didactic. The greatest evil, he said, was an "unteachable theology."²³ The emphasis on the reine Lehre which became characteristic of Lutheran Orthodoxy led to a dogmatic spirit which in turn set the stage for the series of doctrinal controversies which shook the young Church until they were brought to an end in the Formula of Concord. A certain theological intellectualism and the extensive use of dogmatic disputation were a part of the heritage of Melanchthon. He had trained a generation of churchmen who were best equipped to be definers of terms and makers of doctrinal formulae.²⁴

The two great historical movements of the time, the renaissance and the reformation, never successfully reconciled in Protestantism, met in Melanch-

²⁰Manschreck, p. 145.

²¹Pauck, The Heritage Of The Reformation, p. 383, footnote 40, "Luther And Melanchthon," pp. 16-17; see also "The Apology Of The Augsburg Confession," The Book Of Concord, St. Louis, Missouri, 1922, III, pp. 42, 59, 66, IV, p. 80; Lentz, p. 53.

²²Bornkamm, "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," p. 78, 79, "Philipp Melanchthon," p. 62; Küberle, p. 41; Manschreck, p. 57.

²³CR XI, Disp. de Aristotele, p. 647, cited by Gass, I, p. 180.

²⁴Dillenberger, pp. 80-81; Pauck, The Heritage Of The Reformation, p. 50; Schmauk, pp. 847-848, 589.

thon. The two aspects of his thought gradually merged, the former becoming an ever more important tool for promoting the latter.²⁵ Neither Luther's aversion toward Erasmus nor his antagonism to Aristotelianism prevented the introduction of humanism into the reformation.²⁶

As early as his inaugural address, "De Corrigendis Adolescentiae Studiis," Melanchthon made the plea for an alliance between theology and true scholarship on the basis of humanistic learning, advocating a return to genuine Aristotelianism.²⁷ Interestingly, when Luther later urged him to give up his work on the classics in order to give his whole time to theology, Melanchthon refused. He made clear that if he were forced to choose between the two fields, he would choose the study of the classics before that of theology.²⁸

Melanchthon came to Wittenberg as an Erasmian. There he was won to Luther's position by his forceful proclamation of the Word of God. However Luther's conflict with Erasmus made clear the real distance between his biblical theology and the reigning humanism. It taught Melanchthon how great his debt was to Christian humanism.

Thus despite Luther's rejection of Erasmus, Melanchthon turned again and again to the prince of humanists and maintained his relationship with him.²⁹ There is every reason to believe that except for his companionship with Luther Melanchthon would have become a "second Erasmus."³⁰ In fact, on one occasion, Luther warned Melanchthon that he ought to be on his guard, "lest

²⁵Manschreck, pp. 13, 82.

²⁶Pauck, The Heritage Of The Reformation, pp. 174-175.

²⁷Pauck, "Luther And Melanchthon," pp. 17-18.

²⁸Schmauk, p. 623.

²⁹Pauck, "Luther And Melanchthon," p. 15.

³⁰Schmauk, p. 624.

he end up at the same point where Erasmus came out."³¹

Melanchthon did repudiate Luther's sharp division between reason and revelation. This is clearly indicated by his increasing appreciation for the Aristotelian philosophy as a valuable and important tool for theology.³² In this way it came about that on the same campus where Luther had declared war on the Aristotelian philosophy, his friend taught it as an indispensable tool of learning.³³

Everywhere Melanchthon sought to find points of meeting between revealed truth and the humanistic conceptions of philosophy. Thus his "Christian humanism"³⁴ was an attempt to improve and not to abandon the scholastic tradition, another attempt to reconcile Aristotle and Christian doctrine.³⁵

Therefore Melanchthon was not so interested in the boundary between reason and revelation as in their co-ordination. The former prepared the way for the latter. The latter did not contradict the former, but supplemented it.

According to Philosophy there are three norms of certainty: general (universal) experience, the knowledge of in-born (innate) principles, and thought ordered in concluding inferences...In the Church we have still a fourth norm of certainty: the divine Revelation in the prophetic and apostolic books, which is guaranteed to us

³¹Letter from Brück to the Elector of Saxony, 1536, quoted in Pauck, "Luther And Melanchthon," p. 14.

³²Manschreck, p. 82.

³³Pauck, "Luther And Melanchthon," pp. 19, 22.

³⁴Bornkamm, "Philipp Melanchthon," p. 68.

³⁵Hildebrandt, pp. 17, 1.

through clear and infallible evidences.³⁶

Thus Melanchthon led the way into a modified Aristotelian scholasticism which was really a continuation of that of the medieval schoolmen.³⁷ For this reason the term Protestant Scholasticism may be used for the period with some justice. The devotion to the causal method (causa efficiens, materialis, formalis, finalis) let logic rule in a one-sided way.³⁸ Melanchthon insisted theology needed the dialectic of philosophy if it was to avoid error: correct definition, division (classification), and demonstration.³⁹

In this way much of the old leaven, which had been cast out, returned to Protestant and particularly Lutheran theology.

MORTIFICATION

The second major motive which underlay all of Melanchthon's work was his desire to make consolation for anxious consciences as unassailable as possible. Overagainst this wish we must investigate Melanchthon's thinking on the themes which disclosed Luther's theology of dying to live to us: mortification, Anfechtung, law, and the cross of the Christian.

Melanchthon described mortification as self-accusation and self-condem-

³⁶CR XIII, pp. 150 f., Bornkamm, "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," p. 82.

³⁷Schmauck, p. 618; Neve, I, pp. 325-326; McGiffert, p. 145.

³⁸Richard, p. 542.

³⁹CR XI, pp. 23, 282; CR XIII, p. 514; quoted in Gass, I, pp. 180-181.

nation, "attributing unto God the glory,"¹ and spoke of mortification and vivification much as Luther had.

One is putting off the body of sins; the other is the rising again through faith. Neither ought these words, mortification, quickening, putting off the body of sins, rising again, to be understood...concerning a feigned change; but mortification signified true terrors, such as those of the dying, which nature could not sustain unless it were supported by faith...And quickening ought...to be understood...as consolation which truly sustains life that is escaping in contrition.²

They are to be understood as daily experiences³ extending through the entire life of the Christian.⁴

One might think the saints would be spared this, but because of the sin which still clings to them, God must "train" them with "affliction, death, and cross."⁵ It is God who "makes us repent" and who "consoles" us.⁶ We must learn to "suffer and to bear the work of God in us, which is our mortification," "giving thanks to him that mortifies us."⁷

Side by side with this view of mortification, Melancthon spoke of a mortification which is a self-imposed discipline. "There is also a voluntary kind of exercise necessary," undertaken to curb the flesh,⁸ "erwählte

¹Loci communes (1521), pp. 251, 252, 258.

²The Apology, V, p. 81, see also III, p. 66., VI, p. 87; Loci communes (1555), pp. 265-266, 269.

³Loci communes (1555), p. 150.

⁴Loci communes (1521), pp. 244, 245, 247, 249-250; see also The Apology, I, p. 32, III, p. 46, VI, pp. 89-90.

⁵Loci communes (1555), pp. 320, 324-325.

⁶Loci communes (1521), pp. 103-104; see also The Apology, VI, p. 91.

⁷Loci communes (1521), pp. 120, 203, see also pp. 225, 233-235.

⁸The Apology, VIII, p. 100, XI, p. 114.

Ubungen" (chosen practices) which keep the Christian in training.⁹

For Luther mortification had as its goal the humbling of the sinner, to make faith possible. The goal of mortification for Melanchthon was a kind of righteousness, a restraining of the Barbarei he feared. His goal for justification and faith was to enable the regenerate to perform good works.¹⁰ Luther's motive was religious, the man of faith coram deo. Melanchthon's motive was ethical, consonant with the goals of humanism everywhere.

ANFECHTUNG

AND THE "TERRORS OF CONSCIENCE"

Melanchthon did not use the term Anfechtung with the frequency one finds in Luther who always spoke in the first person where Anfechtung was concerned. The term Melanchthon most frequently used was "terrors of conscience."

This faith of which we speak arises in repentance, and ought to be established and grow in the midst of good works, temptations, and dangers, so that we may continually be the more firmly persuaded that God for Christ's sake cares for us, forgives us, hears us.

⁹Loci communes (1555), pp. 348-351.
¹⁰The Apology makes this point again and again. III, pp. 41, 42, 54, 56, 61, 66, 67, IV, p. 80. Melanchthon wrote: "I never wanted to become engaged in theological work for any other reason than that I might contribute to the improvement of life." Quoted in Pauck, "Luther And Melanchthon," pp. 16-17.

This is not learned without many and great struggles. How often is conscience aroused, how often does it incite even to despair when it brings to view sins, either old or new, or the impurity of our nature! This handwriting is not blotted out without a great struggle, in which experience testifies what a difficult matter faith is. And while we are cheered in the midst of the terrors and receive consolation, other spiritual movements at the same time grow, the knowledge of God, fear of God, hope, love of God; and we are regenerated...¹

"Terror of conscience" occurs when man feels God is angry with him. Man — feels "accursed," "convicted," and "condemned."² However, faith is "conceived" in such terrors, and in them grows and is strengthened. Throughout the believer's entire life faith is "nourished" and "exercised" in temptation and by struggling with despair.³ Finally there is victory in Christ, however not because our conflict has in any way merited it.⁴

These temptations bring knowledge of sin.⁵ They also discern hypocritical faith from true.⁶ However they threaten the Christian and it must never be forgotten that

¹The Apology, III, p. 66, also p. 60

²Ibid, V, pp. 80-82, III, p. 46.

³Ibid, III, p. 43, V, pp. 80-81, XII, p. 120.

⁴Ibid, II, pp. 36, 38, XII, p. 122; Loci communes (1555), pp. 267-269.

⁵Loci communes (1555), p. 266.

⁶Loci communes (1521), pp. 214-215.

this is the highest and most noble consolation for the Christian, for in all great Anfechtungen and anxieties of the Christian the first thought in the heart is: God is angry with you, therefore He punishes you. Whoever does not apprehend consolation in his heart, that God punishes us out of grace, not to damn us, but to discipline us in a fatherly way, and to practise our faith, for him Anfechtung and anxiety become only greater and the individual must finally despair. Therefore the Gospel speaks of afflictions as signs of grace.⁷

Luther saw tentatio as "the real university of God" in which faith was preserved and cultivated. Thus Luther's concept of the certainty of salvation was very different from the idea of the possession of grace developed in Lutheran Orthodoxy. He did not conceive of grace as a fixed quantity which could be possessed by the Christian passively. Grace could only be known in struggle and conflict.⁸ For Luther this conflict was not a "psychologically abnormal state" which should be gotten over as soon as possible, but instead it was a means in the hand of God to reveal to man his true state.⁹ Although a forgiven sinner, the believer again and again falls into unfaith, so that there are Anfechtungen to the end of his days, that he may be compelled to fight for his faith.¹⁰

⁷Loci communes (1555), p. 317, see also pp. 319-320, 325.

⁸Köberle, pp. 185-186, 228.

⁹Prenter, Spiritus Creator, p. 14.

¹⁰Pauck, The Heritage Of The Reformation, p. 26.

However Melanchthon could not maintain this view. Desiring to preserve the absolute objectivity of the sola gratia and therefore of certainty, he taught that man cannot love God until he has apprehended the forgiveness of sins by faith.

the heart, truly feeling that God is angry, cannot love God, unless He be shown to have been reconciled. As long as He terrifies us, and seems to cast us into eternal death, human nature is not able to take courage, so as to love a wrathful, judging, and punishing God.¹¹

Here the simul justus et peccator is denied, for this can only mean that Anfechtung must be past in point of time before man can love God. In this way the dialectic of old man/new man, law/gospel, Anfechtung/faith, death/life as the rhythm of the Christian life is denied. Actually these become stages, are "temporalized," and the unity and force of Luther's thought is lost.

There is here implied that Anfechtung is something to be gotten through, to be terminated as soon as possible, so that in the faith which follows it, one can turn to God. This is precisely contrary to Luther's profound "flucht zu Gott gegen Gott."¹² Victory over Anfechtung is only possible when the angefochtene Christian flees precisely to the wrathful God. The Christian must trust God in faith even then and "break through the mask" of God's wrath to His fatherly love.

Thus Melanchthon did not maintain Luther's understanding of the inseparable unity of Anfechtung/faith. Ultimately he failed to see Anfechtung as

¹¹The Apology, II, p. 35, see also III, pp. 59-60, V, p. 80.

¹²See p. 69 above.

an activity of God's "left hand," of His opus alienum. In fact he did not understand the opus alienum Dei.

THE LAW

Melanchthon's doctrine of the law would appear to follow Luther's very closely. He early wrote of men being "terrified and slain" by the law and made alive by Christ.¹ "The law indicates the sickness, the gospel the remedy;" the law is the "minister of death," the gospel the "minister of life." The law censures "hypocrisy, impiety, security," and every vice. "Scripture calls the law the power of wrath and of sin, the sceptre of an executioner, lightning, thunder." Without the law sin cannot be known and therefore the gospel cannot be rightly taught without at the same time teaching the law.² The law's "proper work" is "to kill and to condemn, to show the root of our sin and to confound us." The work of the gospel is to console and vivify.³ The conscience flees the dreadful wrath of God and would despair were it not for the gospel which brings Christ.⁴

However, to this Melanchthon added what was called the tertius usus legis.

¹Paul And The Scholastics (1520), p. 40.

²Loci communes (1521), pp. 144-145, 148, 151, 153-154.

³Ibid., pp. 157-160, 162, 164-166, 171-172, 231.

⁴The Apology, V, pp. 80-82; Melanchthon, Philipp, "The Church And The Authority Of The Word," (1539), Melanchthon: Selected Writings, E. T. Hill, C. L., Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1962, pp. 163-164. On Melanchthon's doctrine of the law, see also Loci communes (1555), pp. 145-149, 267-268, 318.

The third use of the preaching of the law is for the saints, who now believe, and are born again through God's Word and the Holy Spirit...Although God now dwells in them and gives them light, motivated them that they do right...this still occurs through God's Word, and the law is necessary for them in this life, that they may know and have a witness regarding which works are pleasing to God.⁵

The tertius usus legis applies only to the reborn inasmuch as they are not reborn. This was not Luther's view. This problem did not arise for him because according to his understanding it was inconceivable that genuine faith could exist apart from a new life.⁶ Melancthon did not maintain this organic unity and instead drew a scholastic distinction between justification and regeneration. Justification was by grace alone and the second use of the law prepared for it; regeneration followed as the Holy Spirit enabled the justified man to keep the law, according to the third use, and he was truly saved.

⁵Loci communes (1555), p. 150. The uses of the law are: (1) usus legis politicus (to restrict), (2) usus legis paedagogicus (to convict), and (3) usus legis didacticus (to direct). Thus Allbeck, W.D., Studies In The Lutheran Confessions, Philadelphia, 1952, p. 268. In later Orthodoxy this was elaborated into: (1) political (external discipline), (2) elenchtical (to convict of sin), (3) pedagogic (compelling to seek solace in Christ), and (4) didactic (instruction and direction). "The first use pertains to unregenerate and obstinate sinners; the second and third to men about to be justified; the fourth to those who are justified and regenerate." Quenstedt, J.A., Theologia Didactico-Polemica (1685), IV, p. 10, quoted in Schmid, Heinrich The Doctrinal Theology Of The Evangelical Lutheran Church, E.T. by Hay, C.A. and Jacobs, H.E., Philadelphia, 1899, pp. 515-516.

⁶Hildebrandt, pp. 42-44.

The moral dimension thus came to the fore again.⁷ Inevitably faith became the "moment of rest" to which morality was the "moment of movement."⁸ Luther's fundamental understanding of the law as a tyrant and an enemy (verderbnismacht) from which Christ came to set us free was lost.⁹ The teaching of the tertius usus legis was unnecessary had Luther's theology of the simul justus et peccator been maintained. Here the second use of the law was directed to the old man, no law at all to the new man who living by the gospel did spontaneously what God willed without the coercion of the law. Luther permitted no restraint or compulsion in the relationship between faith and the new life. The relationship for him was never legal, but one the natural outgrowth of the other.¹⁰

The first use of the law is morality before man. The second use of the law is morality coram deo. When simul justus et peccator is fully understood, it is seen that the second use of the law is to bring man back from the status justus to the status peccatoris, while the work of the gospel is to bring man from the status peccatoris to the status justus. The Christian is always

⁷ McGiffert, p. 78, citing C.R. XXI, p. 428.

⁸ Pinomaa, Lennart Der Existenzielle Charakter der Theologie Luthers, Suomalaisen Tiedesakatseman Toimituksia, Annales Academiæ Scientiarum Fennicæ, B, XLVII, Helsinki, 1940, p. 158.

⁹ Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 127; Pinomaa, Der Existenzielle Charakter der Theologie Luthers, pp. 157-158.

¹⁰ Pinomaa, Ibid., pp. 159-160. Luther knew only two uses of the law. In the greater commentary on Galatians, which contains the fullest statement of his doctrine of the law, there is no third use. Not even in his writing, Wider die Antinomier (1539), does the third use appear. See Pinomaa's summary here, Ibid., pp. 160-170. This conclusion is confirmed by Bridston, K.R. "Law And Gospel And Their Relationship In The Theology Of Luther," unpublished dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1949, pp. 29-30. It is also interesting to note that Luther's Smalkald Articles, which stand side by side with Melancthon's Apology in The Book Of Concord, contain no third use of the law. See Part III, Article II, p. 142.

caught up in this rhythm so long as life lasts.¹¹ Melanchthon did not maintain this dialectical, tension-filled understanding.

In a second way Melanchthon obscured Luther's distinction between law and gospel. The more Melanchthon opposed the influence of subjective human factors in justification, the more he set it in a "rigid, legalistic scheme,"¹² and gave it a purely judicial character, comparable to a trial.¹³ Legal categories were employed in justification.¹⁴ The final result was a legalistic view of man's relationship to God. Again Luther's conception of the law as a tyrant and an enemy from which Christ came to set men free was lost. Instead Christ was offered to God in man's stead to satisfy His retributive justice.¹⁵

Thus Luther's sharp dialectic between law and gospel was dulled and their clear distinction muddled by making room for the tertius usus legis¹⁶ and a nomistic view of justification. Obscured necessarily as a result was the distinction between the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei. The law belonged to both and thus Luther's dynamic understanding was lost.

¹¹Pinomaa, Ibid., pp. 175-176.

¹²Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 126.

¹³Haikola, pp. 94-95.

¹⁴Hildebrandt, p. 45; Küberle, p. 91. Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 306, III, p. 86; Hildebrandt, pp. 45-46.

¹⁵Aulen, Christus Victor, pp. 126-128, 130; see also Haikola, pp. 89-103;

¹⁶Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 36, 232.

¹⁶Bornkamm, "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," p. 82.

THE CROSS OF THE CHRISTIAN

Melanchthon wrote about the cross of the Christian much as Luther had. That Christians may have "sure consolation" in all their afflictions, Anfechtungen, and anxieties, it is necessary that they understand that the Church must suffer persecution and bear the cross in this life. There is still weakness and sin clinging to the saints, belonging to the flesh and the old Adam, which God must mortify.¹ While the pagans think such afflictions come merely from the natural order or from blind fortune, it is important that Christians understand that they are "a discipline by which God exercises his saints," that amidst their trials they may learn to seek God's aid. These afflictions are not signs of His wrath, for God loves the Church and intends to console it, but instead God is doing His strange work so that He may do His proper work, that the power of God might be made manifest in man's weakness.² Precisely in affliction faith grows and increases.³ No matter how "bitter" his experience, the Christian ought not flee from afflictions or refuse them when God sends them to him.⁴ In all such afflictions and Anfechtungen the Christian should call upon God in prayer, for the Lord is nigh unto all who are of a broken heart.⁵

The Church is being conformed to the image of Christ. The experience of the Christian is "inherited from his Lord."⁶

¹ Loci communes (1521), p. 124; The Apology, VIII, p. 100; Loci communes (1555), p. 320.

² The Apology, VI, p. 92; Melanchthon, Philipp "Against The Anabaptists," Melanchthon: Selected Writings, E.T. Hill, C.L., Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1962, p. 105; see also Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 44-46.

³ The Apology, III, p. 64; Loci communes (1555), pp. 322-324.

⁴ The Apology, II, p. 33; Loci communes (1555), pp. 321-322, 326-327.

⁵ Loci communes (1555), pp. 322-323, 325.

⁶ Loci communes (1555), pp. 316-318, 320-321.

In this life the pious are occupied with terrible afflictions because God in his marvelous purpose wants the Church to be subjected to the cross and to taste the afflictions of Christ.⁷

Melanchthon also followed Luther faithfully in teaching that the cross was not to be self-chosen. The cross of the Christian is not composed of afflictions which we "make ourselves," as the monastics did, but which befall us, without our choice and against our will. No man ought to "torment himself." It is a pagan error to believe such practices please God. There is a great difference between "chosen human practices" of asceticism and the death of the old man which follows in suffering or cross, or in the terrors felt before God's wrath.⁸ Melanchthon followed Luther in teaching that mortification was not to be effected by "disciplinary inventions" of human origin or tradition, but by fulfilling the duties of one's calling and in patience endurance of sufferings sent by God. No one need seek the cross or impose it upon himself, but when it comes he ought to bear it willingly and obediently.⁹

Nevertheless this teaching so important in the personal experience of Luther, repeated by Melanchthon, still appearing in the Compendium Of Lutheran Theology of Leonard Hutter (1563-1616), was treated much less extensively in the work of John Quenstedt (1617-1688), and by the time of John Baier (1647-1695) and David Hollaz (1646-1713) had passed off the scene in

⁷ The Church And The Authority Of The Word (1539), p. 173.

⁸ Loci communes (1555), pp. 322, 348-350.

⁹ Küberle, pp. 185-186.

Orthodox Lutheran Dogmatics.¹⁰

TROST

We have noted that the second great motivation of Melanchthon's work was his desire to make consolation for anxious consciences as objective and unassailable as possible. This has been called critically Melanchthon's "one-sided interest in the consolatory value of doctrine."¹

The need for and importance of this Trost is everywhere underscored. After the "terrors of conscience," it is important that faith comes and "pacifies" the heart.²

mortification is not completed until the old Adam has become extinct. Wherefore it happens that, in the meantime and forever throughout the entire life, there is need for a sign that will console the conscience in the process of this constant mortification.³

Such faith is a "certain confidence" that Christians may be consoled with certainty. Such consolation makes Christian hearts firm against despair, teaching that God is near to them.⁴

¹⁰ See here Hutter, Leonard Compendium Of Lutheran Theology (1609), E.T. Jacobs, H.E. and Spieker, G.F., Philadelphia, 1868, pp. 201-204, e.g.; Schmid, pp. 508-509.

¹ This is Karl Holl's criticism, see here C.R. XV, 1159, Hildebrandt, p.53; Paul And The Scholastics (1520), p. 42; see also Bornkamm, "Philipp Melanchthon" p. 58, "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," pp.76-78.

² Loci communes (1521), pp. 233-234; The Apology, V, p. 81.

³ Loci communes (1521) p. 246; see also The Apology, II, p.37, III, p.54.

⁴ Loci communes (1555) pp. 268, 316-317, 319, 323.

With this interest in mind, Melanchthon's motive is quite clear. He sought to guard the sola gratia by making it as unassailable as he knew how. Melanchthon's way of doing this was to make the certainty of grace as objective as possible, uncompromized by subjective factors of any kind.⁵ Therefore he wrote:

If justification were by our works rather than by faith,
the conscience would never be at rest...and the result
would be nothing but despair.⁶

If consciences are to become "tranquil," justification must be found otherwise than in fulfilling the law. A conscience cannot be "pacified" from the "terrors of sin" except by faith.⁷ The conscience is always tormented if it relies on anything in itself and can never affirm in this way that it has a reconciled God.⁸

if we merit eternal life by our works, hearts or consciences...are never certain that God is gracious...
(this) leads to nothing but misery of soul and finally
despair.⁹

Believers will "always quake with doubt" whether they have satisfied all the conditions if they are dependent on subjective factors in themselves, and will never be sure that they have a gracious God. The hope of eternal life dare not be "fickle", but must be certain, otherwise the entire life

⁵Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 221.

⁶Loci communes (1521), p. 209; The Apology, II, pp. 34, 38, 39.

⁷The Apology, III, pp. 46-50.

⁸Ibid., III, pp. 58, 62.

⁹Ibid., III, p. 63.

is without God.¹⁰

With this as his motive Melanchthon did his best to safeguard the sola gratia and the peace of the soul free from the torments of Anfechtung by defining man's salvation as a transcendental occurrence.¹¹ Or to put this another way, the difficulties Melanchthon had with Anfechtung (because it puts the certainty of consolation, so important to him, in doubt again and again) made it necessary for him to view it as only a transitional stage on the way to that certainty which truly belongs to the saved.¹² Therefore he never tired of emphasizing that the believer must be freed of Anfechtung before he can fully come to grace. To quote a second time from The Apology, II:

As long as He (God) terrifies us, and seems to cast us into eternal death, human nature is not able to take courage, so as to love a wrathful, judging, and punishing God...¹³

¹⁰The Apology, III, pp. 46-50, 63, 64, 85.

¹¹Hildebrandt, p. 50; see also Stupperich, p. 79; Haikola, pp. 92-93. This point of view landed Melanchthon in other difficulties. He sought to preserve the sola gratia by emphasizing the psychological passivity and receptive character of faith. The more he emphasized God's role the more it was necessary to emphasize the passivity of man. Whenever he sought to spare a place for man's activity, he fell into synergistic formulae. Thus in his famous "synergism" he was the victim of his own forms of thought. This is a problem Luther never knew in his theology. Haikola, pp. 95, 100, 101.

¹²Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 143-144.

¹³The Apology, II, p. 35, see also, III, pp. 42, 59. Melanchthon's lead was followed in later Orthodoxy so that Luther's understanding of Anfechtung was gradually lost. "Doubt, conflicting with confidence, is reprov'd in Scripture...In Romans 14, 'Whatever is not of faith,' and 'Whatever is of a doubtful conscience,' are synonyms." Thus Martin Chemnitz Examen Concilii Tridentini (1565-1573), I, p. 192, quoted in Schmid, p. 418.

This temporalizing of the process makes chronological distinctions necessary¹⁴ and Trost becomes a stage or a state to be reached. Melanchthon hurried from simul justus et peccator to the state of grace, leaving the terrors of conscience behind him.

As we have already noted Luther did not regard Anfechtung as a "psychologically abnormal state" or a "disease of the mind," but a means in the hand of God which He utilizes again and again to bring man to Himself.¹⁵ In fact the "very feeling of being at an infinite distance from God is a product of His grace,"¹⁶ when the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei are properly understood.

ORDO SALUTIS

Melanchthon's desire to maintain objective and unassailable consolation for angefechtene consciences and his humanistic interest in psychologizing the process led to the creation of an ordo salutis in which the temporal succession of various steps became more and more important. This ordo salutis began with Melanchthon, is found in the Lutheran Confessions, and reached its fullest development in the Orthodox theology of the 17th century. Justification, regeneration, and the new obedience became separate matters which stood alongside one another, and in succession, rather

¹⁴Bonhoeffer, Cost Of Discipleship, p. 54.

¹⁵Prenter, Spiritus Creator, p. 14.

¹⁶Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 143-144.

than being held in an inseparable unity as with Luther.¹

Melanchthon began to develop the psychological process by which a man comes to faith.² Upon contritio and fides follows justificatio. The latter is entirely forensic and thus must be clearly distinguished from regeneratio and renovatio which follow it.³ The result was a series of "quantitative" stages⁴ which stretched between "the period of the state of sin and the period of the state of grace."⁵

Melanchthon's attempt to make justification absolutely certain and unassailable by eliminating all subjective influences and making it as objective as possible resulted in justification's becoming a "transaction before God's court of justice." It then became necessary to find a place in the process for the more subjective aspects of a person's coming to faith. The entire ordo salutis, as a series of different phases in a process, simply demonstrates that Melanchthon found it necessary to join together again what in the New Testament and Luther were a unity, the objective and the

¹Schlink, Edmund Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften, E.T. Theology Of The Lutheran Confessions, by Koehnke, P.F. and Bouman, H.J.A., Philadelphia, 1961, pp. 115 footnote 4, 309-310; Seeberg, pp. 359-360.

²Bornkamm, "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," p.86.

³Seeberg, pp. 359-360; see also The Apology, V, pp. 82,83; The Formula Of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article III, pp. 250-255. The later dogmatists, from Abraham Calovius (1612-1686) on arranged the following topics together: vocation, illumination, conversion and regeneration, mystical union and renovation. Schmid, p. 407, see also p. 441; Gass, I, p. 257. J.A. Quenstedt Theologia Didactico-Polemica (1685), II, p. 621, quoted in Schmid, p. 481, contended that the various steps or stages were simultaneous, but such counsel was easily forgotten when the very arrangement of the theological material implied successive stages.

⁴Schlink, p. 309.

⁵Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 168-169.

subjective.⁶

Thus the creation of an ordo salutis was Melanchthon's attempt to guarantee the "objective" nature of justification and still find a place for its subjective aspects, an attempt to "balance" the role of God and the role of man. Melanchthon became preoccupied with the question at what point in the psychologico-religious process God declared the individual to be righteous. As a result more attention was paid to the subjective conditions which must be fulfilled than was consistent with Melanchthon's purpose.⁷ For in the final form of the ordo salutis in Lutheran Orthodoxy justification was located near the end of the series. Vocatio, illuminatio, regeneratio, and conversio, including repentance and faith, were placed prior to justification. Thus justification became contingent on the previous factors in a subjective preparatory process.⁷ and attention was shifted from God and His crucified and risen Son to the status of man.⁸ In spite of all his efforts to the contrary, in attempting to answer the question, if justification is an altogether forensic event without taint of the subjective, why does one man come to faith and another not, Melanchthon found the cause in man.⁹

⁶ Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 155-156. When fides and the unio mystica are separated in order to insure the "objectivity" of fides, the latter is thoroughly intellectualized, and the objective-subjective unity of Luther's dialectic is torn asunder. Tillich A History Of Christian Thought, p. 232, on this point see further Systematic Theology, II, p. 178; Ritschl Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 90-91, 123-124, III, p. 123; Bonhoeffer Cost Of Discipleship, p. 54; Stupperich, p. 85; Köberle, pp. 92-94 footnote 12; Schlink, pp. 124-126; Schaff The Creeds Of Christendom, I, p. 272.

⁷ Braaten, pp. 105-106, 109, 112-114, 116-117, 119-120; Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 286-287.

⁸ Schlink, p. 309; Allbeck, p. 259.

⁹ Schmauk, p. 601.

There is still another criticism which must be leveled against the "temporalizing" of coming to faith. It focused attention on the individual and the various stages through which he ought to pass in "individual isolation." Thus Orthodoxy isolated the individual and set the stage for Pietism's preoccupation with his lonely subjective struggle and his personal progress in piety.¹⁰

This amounts to a serious denial of the simul justus et peccator, for, all protestations to the contrary, these "states" or "stages" were stages on the way to the end of the process, stages of closeness to God. This "temporalized" process was a wooden, artificial, psychologically unreal and unsound one which was Melancthon's poor substitute for Luther's dialectic understanding.¹¹

But the work of God is not some episode in a series, the others of which are the work of man.¹² Passing from one stage to another in this series is a psychological process which is altogether anthropocentric. Focusing attention on this temporal, psychological process, in fact the invention of an ordo salutis, was itself an anthropocentricism. The process was seen almost entirely from man's side, and however unintentionally, the theocentric perspective was lost.¹³ Luther avoided this difficulty for his attention was focused on the initiative of God: opus alienum/opus

¹⁰Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 286-289, 327-330, 345.

¹¹Even Werner Elert acknowledged that much of what later dogmatists of Lutheran Orthodoxy taught about the ordo salutis is open to criticism. Morphologie des Luthertums, E.T. The Structure Of Lutheranism, by Hansen, W.A., Saint Louis, Missouri, 1962, p. 102. See also pp. 101, 142-143.

¹²Prenter, Spiritus Creator, p. 295.

¹³Ibid., pp. 294-295.

proprium, law /gospel, old man/new man, death/life.

SIMUL JUSTUS ET PECCATOR

It would appear that Melanchthon had tried to maintain Luther's dialectic of simul justus et peccator. He referred to I Samuel 2:6 and Isaiah 28:21 as Luther had done and wrote: it is

the strange work of the Lord when He terrifies, because to quicken and console is God's own work. But He terrifies...that there may be a place for consolation and quickening, because hearts that are secure and do not feel the wrath of God leathe consolation. In this manner Scripture is accustomed to join these two, the terrors and the consolation...For the two chief works of God in men are these, to terrify, and to justify and quicken those who have been terrified. Into these two works all Scripture has been distributed. The one part is the law, which shows, reproves, and condemns sins. The other part is the gospel, that is, the promise of grace bestowed in Christ...¹

This death/life is not a "work that pertains to one certain period but

¹ The Apology, V, p. 82, see also VI, p. 92; Schlink, pp. 137-138; Loci communes (1555), p. 317; Melanchthon, Philipp "Summary Of Doctrine" (1524) Melanchthon: Selected Writings, E.T. Hill, C. L., Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1962, pp. 94-95; Against The Anabaptists, p. 107.

signifies repentance during our whole life." "We ought always to repent and to be alarmed at the judgment of God. We ought always to be raised up and confirmed through faith."²

Repentance is not of any one period, for the flesh should be mortified throughout all of life and carnal security should be put off, and, on the other hand, faith and spiritual peace of heart ought to grow.³

But for all this Melanchthon obscured the paradoxical nature of Luther's position. For Luther the Christian was in every moment simul justus et peccator.⁴ To this paradoxical nature in the believer was directed God's opus alienum and opus proprium, bound together in an inseparable unity,⁵ the purpose of which was to bring the believer to participation in both Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.⁶

Melanchthon's intellectualist tendencies sought to ^{remove} polish-off some of the paradoxical elements in this and thus his work, like all scholasticism, robbed the distinction between the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei of its radical nature. Both were so "adjusted" that they might be held together, and as a result lost their depth and full power.⁷

In the same way the relationship between the objective and subjective sides of Luther's dialectic was gradually obscured by his intellectualistic

²Against The Anabaptists, pp. 107-109.

³Ibid., p. 117, see also pp. 110, 118.

⁴Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 71-72; Pauck The Heritage Of The Reformation, pp. 54-55.

⁵Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 293-294.

⁶Ibid., pp. 92-93, see also pp. 186, 198.

⁷Aulen The Faith Of The Christian Church, pp. 103-104, 126-128.

definition of faith.⁸ With the subjective side of the dialectic, the genuine Begegnung between the Holy Spirit and the believer obscured, the unity of the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei fell apart. The dialectic of law/gospel, Anfechtung/faith, conformity with the Crucified One/Risen One, was lost. Instead the whole was understood as a passing from one stage to another, from one state to another, in an orde salutis viewed as a psychological process and therefore purely anthropocentric.⁹

This criticism is the most telling, for in effect Melanchthon's orde salutis denied the rhythm of death/life as a life-long mark of the Christian life. The result was that the force of the doctrine of the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei was obscured until it was lost altogether in later Lutheran Orthodoxy. Melanchthon failed to understand this as the work of God's left hand/right hand which continues throughout the believer's life, and one is left with the unmistakeable impression that he desired nothing so much as to leave the terrors of conscience behind in order to arrive as quickly as possible at the state of grace.

⁸ Pelikan, Jaroslav "The Doctrine Of Man In The Lutheran Confessions," The Lutheran Quarterly, Vol. II, 1950. See the excellent summary on this point in Engelland, Hans Melanchthon, Glauben und Handeln, München, 1931, pp. 483-525.

⁹ Prenter, Spiritus Creator, p. 224; see also Schlink, p. 306.

THEOLOGIA GLORIAE

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's name for Lutheran Orthodoxy's formulation of the sola fide was "cheap grace."¹ The "consolations of religion are thrown away at cut-rate prices." Grace as a doctrine is a cheap covering for sins. The great discovery of the reformation was not that grace is "automatically conferred" on all men apart from their personal involvement in it. For Luther the re-discovery of the sola gratia was like "water on parched ground" because of the totality of his involvement and the depth and the length of his struggle. What he had learned at the cost of his life, became, for his followers, the justification of their lives as they were. Sola gratia came to mean sins were justified in advance. Lutherans have paid the doctrine of pure grace honors "unparalleled in Christendom." Luther's formula has been repeated by them everywhere, but its truth "perverted into self-deception."² Melancthon and Lutheran Orthodoxy turned the reception of grace into a knowledge of grace and faith into a knowledge of doctrines. The death/life effected in man by the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei was more and more obscured.

In his criticism of Melancthon here, Ritschl wrote, "the problem of personal assurance is insoluble if it be conceived in a form which represents the subject as passive."³ It was certainly insoluble as Melancthon

¹Here the term is used for Melancthon's inability to fully understand the dialectical nature of coming to faith, his denial of the subjective side of it as a real encounter with the living God, and his definition of the process solely in an "objective," intellectualist way.

²Bonhoeffer, The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 35-37, 40-45, 47, 50; see also Hildebrandt, pp. 53-54; and Dorner, Briefwechsel, II, p. 114, quoted in Schaff, Philip, History Of The Christian Church, VII, New York, 1910, p. 667.

³Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 191.

formulated it. For while he sought to make the cause of certainty objective and transcendent and therefore as unassailable as possible, he put his faith not in God or His Word, per se, but in the "more exact" formulations of theological doctrines. And what could be more arbitrary and insecure than that!⁴ The whole drift of later Lutheran Orthodoxy proves this point, not the least the controversy over a theologia irrogenitorum.

The objectification of the whole proceeded so far that Orthodoxy defended a theologia irrogenitorum against the pietists. If being justified is a doctrine the validity of which can be demonstrated on the authority of Scripture,⁵ then anyone who can read the Bible ought to be able to write a theology so long as he can understand the sentences and words.⁶

Knowledge always creates a theologia gloria.⁷ Here the Bible became a system of doctrines a man might have "black on white" and carry home with him.⁷ The sola gratia breaks man's pride,⁸ but the reine Lehre became an "intellectual pelagianism,"⁹ an "intellektuelle Werkerei" or "Werkerei der Lehre"¹⁰ exactly parallel to the work-righteousness it was meant to replace and as much an example of the incurvitas in se ipso as any other form of pride.¹¹ Lutheran Orthodoxy thought it possessed Christ

⁴Prenter, Spiritus Creator, p. 294.

⁵Braaten, pp. 110-111.

⁶Tillich A History Of Christian Thought, p. 229.

⁷von Loewenich Die Geschichte der Kirche, p. 292; Pauck "Luther And Melancthon," p. 31.

⁸Niebuhr, Reinhold The Nature And Destiny Of Man, New York, 1945, II, pp. 229-231.

⁹Braaten, pp. 111-112.

¹⁰Hildebrandt, p. 28.

¹¹Tillich Systematic Theology, I, p. 52, II, p. 84; see also Brunner The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 22-26, 74-75, 87, 171-172, 199; Pauck The Heritage Of The Reformation, pp. 6-7.

because it knew what the Scripture said about Him. In Luther's more theocentric perspective, the opus alienum Dei destroys and clears away our knowledge in order to make room for faith.¹² In the theologia crucis, faith is opposed to knowledge. The cross is "sheer folly" (I Corinthians 1) to reason, and therefore the cross is God's judgment on all theologia glorie of rational speculation even under the name of the reine Lehre.¹³

Only faith is not offended at the theologia crucis. Luther too had recognized that justification could not be grounded on any aspect of man's subjectivity, but only on the Divine Word.¹⁴ Still he never understood this to mean a Word reduced to doctrines made manipulable and disposable; for him it meant to turn our gaze from ourselves, our spiritual state of being, to Christ.¹⁵ It did not mean to turn our gaze from ourselves to an "objective" system of doctrines, but to Christ who as living, sovereign Lord is never an "object" to be manipulated, but the Lord. He is not an object but a person and the Begegnung which takes place with him is a personal encounter.

Melanchthon wanted to protect the sola gratia by removing all subjective factors in man from influencing it in any way. He made it as objective as he knew how and therefore as objectively certain as possible.

¹²On this point see the fundamental discussion in Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 116, 119, 123, 128, 129, 164, 167-171, 188, 256-261, 294-298.

¹³Bendtz, N.A. "Faith And Knowledge In Luther's Theology," Reformation Studies, Richmond, Virginia, 1962, pp. 23-24; Fisher, R.H. "A Reasonable Luther," Reformation Studies, Richmond, Virginia, 1962, pp. 32-35.

¹⁴Köberle, pp. 92-94 footnote 12; Aulen The Faith Of The Christian Church, p. 111.

¹⁵Stupperich, p. 81.

This certainty was very important to Melanchthon.¹⁶ But that kind of Gewissheit is very close to Sicherung and thus to Sicherheit. And secu-
ritas is theologia glorie at its idolatrous worst.

¹⁶Bornkamm "Humanismus und Reformation im Menschenbild Melanchthons," p. 83.

PHILIPP JAKOB SPENER

(1635-1705)

AND LUTHERAN PIETISM

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Given the movement in Lutheran Orthodoxy toward defending the theological insights of the reformation by casting them in unassailable, "objective" form, reaction was inevitable. The loss of a significant dimension of reformation truth was bound to evoke an attempt to recover it. Orthodoxy tended to play down the aspect of religious experience, when discussing the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei, and the topics of Anfechtung, the law, and the cross of the Christian, in order to emphasize the reine Lehre as more "objectively" verifiable and reliable. Thus the reaction, when it came, sought to recover the "subjective" aspect of the reformation position. Unfortunately, Pietism was conditioned by the Orthodoxy against which it reacted and thus was unable to get back to the reformation. Instead it took its point of departure, its definition of the problems, and therefore the form of its answers, from Lutheran Orthodoxy.

Pietism arose at the end of the long reign of Orthodoxy and acted as a transition to the Aufklärung. The historical moment was the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) "which thoroughly decimated the population of Germany and set it back at least a century."¹ The war was morally disastrous and with its rough and brutal aftermath there was a general revulsion against the spectacle of religious groups fighting each other over differing

¹Pelikan From Luther To Kierkegaard, p. 79; Hirsch, Emmanuel Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie, II, Gutersloh, 1951, p. 109; Tillich A History Of Christian Thought, p. 234.

theological positions.²

The cold, intellectual, scholastic method of Orthodox theology produced endless theological controversy and bickering, and very little practice of the Christian life.³ Like Luther, Spener used the term Sicherheit. However when Spener used the term he always referred to the typical Christian of the Age of Orthodoxy proud and secure in his "reine Lehre," or, in a favorite phrase of Spener's, in his "buchstäbliche Glaube." By the phrase Spener meant a dead faith which did not demonstrate its genuineness in works of Christian virtue.⁴ Pietism wanted to go back to the Sixteenth Century to complete the Reformation. The purification of doctrine already accomplished needed to be followed by the sanctification of life.⁵

In 1675 Spener wrote a preface to an edition of Johann Arndt's Postils entitled Pia Desideria. The first part portrayed the wretched moral and religious condition of the land and people. The second part described what might be done in the way of reform. The first desire was Bible study by all Christians. Here Spener recommended study-groups which were called collegia pietatis. Second Spener emphasized the priesthood of all believers which declared it was the duty of every Christian to instruct and to admonish his brother. Third Christianity was not so much something to be

²Dillenberger and Welch, pp. 96-98; Richard, pp. 546-547.

³Randall, J.H. The Making Of The Modern Mind, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1940 pp. 405-406.

⁴E.g. Theologische Bedencken, Bände I-IV, Halle, 1700-1702, III, p. 135; see also Rotermund, Hans-Martin Orthodoxie und Pietismus, Berlin, 1959, pp. 35, 38.

⁵However one is reminded that Luther had to contend with Enthusiasts who wanted to finish the work of reformation. Prenter Spiritus Creator, p. 205; see Gass, II, pp. 379-410; Zeeden, I, pp. 86-87; McGiffert, pp. 159-160. Spener wrote, "we have come out of Babel, but the Temple has not yet been built." Theologische Bedencken, III, p. 180.

known as to be practiced. Fourth theological controversy was condemned and the need for dealing with the erring in love underscored. Fifth the disorderly academic life of ministerial training was attacked and recommendations advanced requiring more piety of the candidates and a more practical training for them. Sixth Spener urged that preaching become less formal and theological and instead more simple and practical.⁶

Here in epitome were most of the features of the Pietist movement: Bible study, depreciation of theology, emphasis on "experience" rather than intellect, and recognition of an ecclesiola in ecclesia made up of the truly regenerate.⁷

Ever since the work of Albrecht Ritschl, Pietism has been linked with the mysticism of the Middle Ages,⁸ particularly in its inclination to "religious inwardness," subjective piety, and a kind of ascetic withdrawal from the world into conventicles.⁹

Spener himself was not temperamentally disposed to mysticism. He was essentially too practical, but what impressed him about the mystics he read was their impatience with formal theology and their emphasis on a vital,

⁶Richard, pp. 549-550; McGiffert, pp. 156-157.

⁷Tillich, A History Of Christian Thought, p. 233; Nichols, J.H. History of Christianity, 1650-1950, New York, 1956, pp. 81-82; Nussbaum, F.L. The Triumph Of Science And Reason, 1660-1685, New York, 1953, p. 189.

⁸Ritschl, Albrecht Geschichte des Pietismus, Bände I, II, Bonn, 1884, one ought to see here Ritschl's famous Prolegomena, I, pp. 3-98, especially pp. 7-61; but also II, pp. 3-33; Mahrholz, Werner Der deutsche Pietismus, Berlin, 1921, p. 6, wrote "in the tradition of Meister Eckhardt and Jacob Böhme."

⁹Gass, II, pp. 381-382, 446; Nichols, p. 81.

inner Christianity.¹⁰ However there can be no doubt Pietism was historically linked with pre-reformation German mysticism and the Enthusiasts, the Schwärmer, of the reformation era.¹¹ Pietism represented a compound of reformation sola gratia and mystical doctrines.¹²

It was an attempt to restore Luther's dialectic by emphasizing its subjective side after the long period of over-emphasis on its objective aspects.¹³ Luther was set over against Luther.¹⁴ The objective and subjective sides of the rapprochement between God and man, combined in him at the source of the reformation, now became antagonistic positions, each claim-

¹⁰Ritschl, Geschichte des Pietismus, II, pp. 98, 100; in Pia Desideria he recommended reading Thomas a Kempis, the Theologia Germanica, and Johann Tauler, all pre-reformation mystics. He spoke highly of Jacob Böhme and Tauler, Theologische Bedencken, I, respectively pp. 321 and 313. His great inspiration was Johann Arndt (d. 1621) whose Wahres Christentum presented a Lutheranism strongly influenced by pre-reformation mysticism. von Loewenich, Die Geschichte der Kirche, pp. 312-313; Ritschl, Geschichte des Pietismus, II, pp. 97-98. About this time conclusions were falsely drawn from Luther's approval of the Theologia Germanica and Tauler. For his own assessment of mysticism, in regard to the Schwärmer, see e.g. his Sermon At Coburg On Cross And Suffering, LW 51, preached against the Schwärmer; Against The Heavenly Prophets In The Matter Of Images And Sacraments, LW 40; Vogelsang, Der angefochtene Christus bei Luther; Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 183; Nussbaum, pp. 189-190.

¹¹Ritschl saw Pietism as a rebirth of the ideals of medieval monasticism outside the cloister. With this view Karl Holl expressly disagreed. He saw its origins in Luther himself, before his theology was given its Melancthonian form. The two views are not antithetic.

¹²There was both an awakening from within the Lutheran Church and the rebirth of Enthusiastic ideas which had found no home in the Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See the very illuminating discussion of this question in Rotermond, pp. 87-107; see also Niebuhr, I, pp. 84-85.

¹³Tillich, A History Of Christian Thought, p. 232.

¹⁴Zeeden, I, pp. 86, 98. In so doing the famous distinction between the younger and the older Luther was coined. "It was Seckendorf who had started the fashion of preferring a young, impulsive Luther to the old reformer and Church founder bent on giving his work a dogmatic base. Spener showed up the difference between Luther young and Luther old, and Arnold played one off against the other." Zeeden, I, p. 90. The pietists preferred the younger Luther who stood closer to the mystics before the mid-1520s when he defined his position more clearly in conscious opposition to the Schwärmer.

ing Luther for its own.

This new interest in the subjective half of Luther's position, and, as a result, in the younger Luther led to the reappearance in Spener of two themes of this study which had all but disappeared in Lutheran Orthodoxy: Anfechtung and the cross of the Christian.

The desire to test religious truth by experience is very old. Orthodoxy clung to the givenness of the Word of God as doctrine, while the Schwarmgeisterei emphasized the personal freedom of the individual and his experience.¹⁵ It was not the doctrine of the Church that needed to be set in order, but it was its life that needed to be altered.¹⁶

Spener never sought to depart from the Orthodox Lutheran doctrine of justification. However, faith could not exist without true piety accompanying it. Thus he emphasized the connection between justification and Wiedergeburt.¹⁷ Still the ultimate result of his position was not to restore the balance between the two, but instead to give the priority to sanctification.¹⁸ The one imbalance was just as serious as the other.

Gradually the true significance of justification was lost, until it finally became little more than the "pre-condition" for the Wiedergeburt.¹⁹ When subjective experience becomes the center of attention, religion becomes individualistic, the "dialogue of a lonely human soul with the deity."²⁰

¹⁵Brunner, The Divine Human Encounter, pp. 26-28.

¹⁶von Loewenich, Die Geschichte der Kirche, p. 314; Randall, pp. 405-406; Küberle, p. 203.

¹⁷Hirsch, II, pp. 139-147.

¹⁸Tillich, Systematic Theology, II, p. 177; Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 232-233. In the generation following Spener justification slipped into the background, behind piety and virtue. Hirsch, II, p. 148.

¹⁹Ritschl, Geschichte des Pietismus, II, p. 23.

²⁰Marholz, p. 6.

"The attention of the isolated individual" is given "to his own religious and moral development."²¹ This "individualization and internalization" led to its own misinterpretation of the life of faith.²²

When we ask about Spener's relationship to the theology of Lutheran Orthodoxy, we must answer Spener never despised the "reine Lehre." He was at great pains to show himself to be a Lutheran of correct belief.²³ Pietism did not find itself in conflict with the theology of the Church, but with its life, its practice. At the same time only that portion of theology which contributed to personal piety was of interest to Spener.²⁴

It is not surprising then that Pietism was Confessionally indifferent.²⁵ These considerations are brought together in the dispute between Orthodoxy and Pietism over a theologia regeneritorum aut irregeneratorum. Here Spener contended that Christian truth was not demonstrable like other truth. According to his understanding, experience was the source of all sure knowledge in religious matters.²⁶ This subjective conception of faith arose

²¹Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 330-331, 326-327.

²²Nichols, pp. 80-81; Pauck, The Heritage Of The Reformation, pp. 206-207.

²³Ritschl, Geschichte des Pietismus, II, pp. 102-103; Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 513-514; Zeeden, I, pp. 86-87.

²⁴Consistent with this interest, Spener himself was not a scholar or thinker. He was essentially a Seelsorger and churchman, Hirsch, II, pp. 116-117, 130; McGiffert, pp. 158-159. In this context it should be noted that Spener was so intent on maintaining the appearance of doctrinal correctness that there is a certain caution in all his writing. This often makes it very difficult to be certain of his final meaning. Nor is he a systematic theologian. His work is piecemeal. Hirsch writes, "His conformity (with Orthodox doctrine) is purchased with many silences and many evasions." Hirsch, II, p. 96; Gass, II, p. 425.

²⁵von Loewenich, Die Geschichte der Kirche, p. 313. Spener wrote, "They err who, contrary to the distinct protest of our confessors, make these books (the Confessions) in practice equal to the Sacred Books." Concilia Latina, I, p. 198 et seqq. quoted in Richard, p. 553.

²⁶Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 7-8; Hirsch, II, pp. 94-95, 107-115, 120.

against intellectualism as it has in other periods of Church history. It arises insisting that the content of faith is secondary to faith "itself."²⁷

WIEDERGEBURT

The decline of the justification-centered theology of Orthodoxy began in Pietism. Instead of justification, or its counterpart in man's faith, as the organizing principle of the whole of theology, Pietism had a new organizing principle, one which centered in a subjective process, for which it used the title, the Wiedergeburt.¹

God alone effects the Wiedergeburt. He does so to equip believers for battle against the spiritual foes: the flesh, sin, and Satan.² It is the "birth that comes from God." It is a real birth, a "spiritual birth," and a new man is the result.³

Orthodoxy's trust in infant baptism was misplaced.

Whoever thinks he is saved by his baptism,
while he continues being pleased with his sins
and does not mortify them, but continues in his

²⁷Aulen, The Faith Of The Christian Church, pp. 75-77.

¹Aulen, Christus Victor, pp. 133-134. One cannot read the four massive volumes of the Theologische Bedencken without being impressed with the striking conformity of all that is there with the theology of the "reine Lehre." All the terminological paraphernalia of Orthodoxy remains. The change the reader detects is rather one of emphasis. Faith has been displaced by the Wiedergeburt.

²Der hochwichtige Articul von der Wiedergeburt, Frankfurt am Main, 1696, pp. 63, 66, 76-82, 102-103. Hereafter abbreviated vonder Wiedergeburt.

³Ibid., pp. 32-35.

sins, possesses no faith worked by the Holy spirit,
but a dangerous deception of the devil.⁴

The children of the pious no less than the godless
need the Wiedergeburt. No one can come to the King-
dom of God without being born again and becoming al-
together other than he is.⁵

Spener spoke of a "double" Wiedergeburt, one which occurs through baptism
and one which occurs through the Word alone. In both God effects a new
life. This distinction is made because the divine grace worked in baptism
remains in some but is lost again by many,⁶ through "false teaching or
godless living," love for the world, the lust of the flesh, or a "proud
life."⁷

Growth in sanctification was the real interest of Pietism. Spener
never tired of saying that the Wiedergeburt was an entirely new birth and
that the wiedergeboren were wholly different persons.⁸ All Spener's works
abound in comparatives. The Christian life in all its aspects is always
seen quantitatively. The main task laid before his followers was that of
conquering sin within themselves by means of sanctification. This summons
to sanctification came so strongly to the fore that justification became
little more than the starting point of the Christian life and forgiveness

⁴Theologische Bedencken, III, p. 137.

⁵von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 9-10.

⁶Theologische Bedencken, I, pp. 179-181.

⁷von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 4, 52-53, 87-89, 120-121; Ritschl Geschichte des Pietismus, II, p. 104.

⁸von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 7-8, 11, 86, 93, 144, 213, 215, 236; Theologische Bedencken, I, p. 259, II, 377-378, 388, III, 231, 382.

of sins less important than the extirpation of evil.⁹

Such works of sanctification are necessary, partly because God commands them, but also because true faith cannot exist without them. Faith which does not show itself in such sanctification is dead.¹⁰ The Christian should love God and his neighbor, be obedient to God in all things, avoid all evil, and increase daily in all good. Whatever serves "growth in sanctification" is good, "that our souls might please our faithful Creator with good works."¹¹ This was Spener's program in capsule.

It is characteristic of Spener that his conception of religion intent on sanctification should seek to widen the distance between the Christian and the world. The Reformation overcame the sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular which the medieval world had bequeathed it.¹² Luther taught that the Christian life was to be lived precisely in the world. But Pietism demonstrated its affinity with the medieval age in at least one regard by reintroducing the old distinction sharply drawn. Spener spoke of "scorn for the earthly," "renunciation of the world," even "nausea toward it." This estrangement from the world became one of the chief marks of his position and gave it an ascetic cast.¹³ Pietism reacted against the worldliness of the common Christian and taught escape from the world. The world

⁹Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 517-518, 534-539;

¹⁰Rotermund, pp. 13-14.

¹⁰einfache Erklärung der christlichen Lehre nach der Ordnung des kleinen Katechismus Luthers (1677), Erlangen, 1827, pp. 138-141, 412, hereafter abbreviated Erklärung der christlichen Lehre.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 165-168; Theologische Bedenken, I, p. 337, II, p. 467.

¹²E.G. Bonhoeffer, Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 39-40; Smith, Ronald Gregor

¹³The New Man, London, 1956, pp. 41-42.

¹³Theologische Bedenken, I, pp. 336-337; Gass, II, pp. 419, 430, 443-446.

lay in wickedness and the Christian ought to withdraw from it lest he be infected and profaned.¹⁴

In Orthodox ethics there were "adiaphora," matters neither commanded nor prohibited which were left unprescribed so that each Christian might set his own ethical limits according to his own conscience. Included were smoking, dancing, beer drinking, theater going, sports, card playing, and extravagant dress. The pietists abhorred these as worldly. The Christian was to impose restraints upon himself, cultivate sobriety of speech and conduct, and flee crude fun, frivolity, and sensual pleasures. In place of beer and tobacco, chocolate and cakes were the great favorites. Some pietists even disapproved of a stroll as a "forbidden worldly lust."¹⁵

In this context Spener raised the question of the possibility of the perfection and sinlessness of the Christian.¹⁶ Perfection he defined relatively in so far as there are degrees of attainment in the Christian life. However the goal was held out to all so that the Christian might strive to make progress more and more.¹⁷

There is a great danger in describing levels of perfection and speaking about the sinlessness of the Christian. An unbearable weight was imposed on the Christian which either produced interminable doubts regarding the attainment of perfection on the one hand or an intolerable spiritual pride on the

¹⁴ McGiffert, pp. 159-160; Aulen, Gustaf Church, Law, And Society, New York, 1948, pp. 4, 5, 8, 54-55.

¹⁵ von Loewenich Geschichte der Kirche, p. 317; Tillich, A History Of Christian Thought, p. 234; Richard, p. 552; Nichols, pp. 84-85.

¹⁶ Rotermund, p. 63; Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 517-518.

¹⁷ Hirsch, II, pp. 148-149; Gass, II, pp. 444-446.

other.¹⁸

PRÜFUNG

The entire point of view we have been charting through "experience," Wiedergeburt, sanctification, renunciation of the earthly, and perfection reached its crest in what Spener had to say about the Christian's need to "test" and "prove" his Wiedergeburt, ultimately as a means of attaining certainty of salvation.

Pietists formally accepted the Formula of Concord's settlement of the Majoristic controversy, about the necessity of good works to salvation, in the words, "we reject and condemn those who say good works are necessary for salvation."¹ But they were uncomfortable with this position. Spener wrote,

let us prove whether we are wiedergebohren, I do not say, whether we were once wiedergebohren, for this is not enough, but...whether we still have the Wiedergeburt in us or not.² 'Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed

¹⁸ Rotermund, pp. 64, 66; In this regard an unbroken line runs from the medieval mystics and ascetics to Pietism. The Pietists did not protest against the medieval ideal of perfection, as the Reformation did, for they were perfectionistic themselves, but instead against its sacramentalism.

Niebuhr, II, pp. 153-154, 161, 169-170.

¹ The Formula Of Concord, Epitome, IV, p. 222.

² von der Wiedergeburt, p. 13.

you fail to meet the test! (II Cor. 13:5) Without Prüfung we believe blindly, while we ought to be on our guard how and on what basis we believe.³

Here the interest has shifted to prüfen (test, examine, prove).

The motivation is clear. The Wiedergeburt can be lost. Lest the Christian become secure (sicher), he must continually subject his Wiedergeburt to testing. Let him be assured through "honest proof" that he does not have a "false imagination" about his state. He may do this by determining whether he serves God or the world.⁴

we must examine (prüfen müssen) ourselves carefully and constantly, as to whether we are in faith and also in such a state that we are confident of salvation or not, so that we do not dangerously deceive ourselves.⁵

Where faith and the Wiedergeburt cannot stand up to such a Prüfung unser selbs, neither is genuine.⁶ No one is in greater spiritual danger than the person who is spiritually secure (sicher). Therefore the Christian does well who is "very careful" in his Prüfung and who does not trust his own flesh in this matter because of its deceptiveness. The best way of avoiding such security (Sicherheit) is by searching the heart.⁷

All this rested on the contention that the divine truth bears fruit in

³ Theologische Bedencken, III, p. 136.

⁴ von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 73-75, 120-122, 168-169.

⁵ Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 169-170.

⁶ Theologische Bedencken, I, pp. 179-180, 259, 314. In the last citation

⁷ Spener commends Tauler for his teaching on the Prüfung unser selbs.

Ibid., I, pp. 335, 337, II, pp. 812-813.

genuine piety. Such a view necessarily demanded visible "tokens of true faith."⁸ In this way Spener obligated everyone to examine and prove the level of his development in experience. Only the man whose life was genuinely altered had any right to think that he was born again and to be counted among the saved.⁹

In the light of the untiring repetition of his warning about the self-deception of an "imagined" faith and the need for "trying" the genuineness of one's Christianity, the question necessarily arose about the marks of living faith. Spener believed faith was empfindlich, i.e. perceptible. However during Anfechtung such Empfindlichkeit was often hidden, so that it was impossible to prove the genuineness of faith on the basis of perception in itself. Since this was so, Spener contended a living faith could and ought to be verified rather in a pious Christian life.¹⁰

In Prüfung the Christian discovers whether his faith is of the right sort.¹¹ Faith is the chief mark of the wiedergeboren, together with the assurance of a "seligen Standes," the fruits of obedience and love for God.¹²

In answering the question then, how can the presence of true faith be known, Spener said not a priori, since this may be lost in Anfechtung, but rather a posteriori. The Christian must see by the fruits of faith whether he is wiedergeboren or not. If he wants to be completely assured of having attained salvation, then this assurance must rest on empirical evidence.¹³

⁸Hirsch, II, p. 96; Ritschl Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 141-142; Zeeden, I, pp. 84-85, 98.

⁹Gass, II, p. 419; McGiffert, p. 159.

¹⁰Hirsch, II, p. 150.

¹¹von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 152, 154.

¹²Theologische Bedencken, I, pp. 323-324, 336-337, II, p. 817.

¹³Ibid., II, p. 818; see also Gass, II, pp. 438-441.

Prove your Wiedergeburt! In Prüfung look for: love for God, joy in doing good, an inner aversion for the world, perseverance in prayer, a longing for the eternal, the intention of avoiding sin, a continuous striving for salvation.

Now it is true when Spener counseled, prove your Wiedergeburt, his stated purpose was not to produce certainty, but rather to force the hypocritical to confront themselves as they actually were and thus to shake their security. Nevertheless, in actual fact, faith and the Wiedergeburt came to be dependent on piety according to this procedure. Where this piety was to be found, there was genuine faith. Where this piety was present a man was assured of his relationship to God.¹⁴

No true faith...can exist without good works...that faith which does not show itself in works, is not righteous, but dead and nothing at all; they (good works) are necessary for assurance (Versicherung) or verification (Prüfung) of whether we are in faith or not.¹⁵

The Wiedergeburt may be known by whether a man still leads his life according to the desires of the flesh and the world or according to the will of God.¹⁶

Let a Christian daily and diligently investigate his life according to the law and the gospel. True "saving faith" may be known by its effects:

¹⁴Hirsch, II, pp. 150-151.

¹⁵Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 140-141.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 408-409; von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 200, 219, see also pp. 239-240.

a) faith cleanses the heart so that sin no longer rules, b) the Christian loves God and his neighbor, c) he obeys God, avoiding all evil and increasing daily in all good, and d) faith conquers the world, the desires of the flesh, and the prince of this world.¹⁷

Again and again Spener asked the question, how can the Wiedergeburt be known. His answer was, saving faith may be known, and the Christian assured of his state, by the fruits of faith.¹⁸ The answer given referred to a moralistic program for individual growth in sanctification.

In one place Spener wrote, "it is the whole summa of Christianity" that the conscience be subjected to Prüfung.¹⁹ The conscience possesses a sure sign of assurance when Christians "cleanse themselves daily of all staining of the flesh and of the spirit and continue in sanctification, seeking more and more to disengage themselves from the world."²⁰

a man may prove (himself) by whether he wants to serve God alone with his whole heart or not and avoid all idle, wanton sins or not. Then let him be consoled in God's name and be assured (versichere) that his is true faith and the work of the Holy Spirit.²¹

¹⁷Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 165-168; see also pp. 411-412.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 450; see also pp. 273-274, 338, 344-345.

¹⁹Theologische Bedencken, II, pp. 687-688.

²⁰Ibid., II, p. 467; see also I, p. 336, II, pp. 808-809.

²¹Ibid., III, pp. 137-138. In one place by way of summary Spener spoke of the signs and marks of faith by which the Christian might be assured of adoption by God as: a) Empfindlichkeit of such inner witnesses as the Holy Spirit may grant, b) trust (Vertrauen) in the heavenly Father, c) an inclination to good, d) the living of a "God-pleasing" life, e) love for one's neighbor, and f) humbly and patiently bearing the suffering and discipline sent by the heavenly Father. Ibid., IV, pp. 3-4; see also pp. 7-13. Spener also urged Christians to test and examine each other as to the genuineness of their Wiedergeburt, so as to share "counsel and encouragement" and to come to "an assurance of the heart." Ibid., II, p. 393.

This necessarily raises the question of Empfindlichkeit, we have already referred to in passing.²² The issue arose for Pietism because of its heavy emphasis on "proving" one's Wiedergeburt and attaining "certainty." Spener regarded it as natural that faith was empfindlich, i.e. a "self-perceived feeling." Confidence in one's relationship to God could not exist without such a perception, but would necessarily perish in doubt and uncertainty.²³ Normally the indwelling of God in the believer becomes more empfindlich and more fruitful as he grows in grace.²⁴ However, the Christian is not to rely altogether on "feeling,"

not only because man is often deceived in such feeling, and for this reason regards as faith that which is only his imagination, but also because in the state of Anfechtung such feeling can be entirely wanting.²⁵

When the "unfailing assurance" (Versicherung) of his faith has been lost in Anfechtung, when Empfindlichkeit is absent, let the believer look to the fruits of his faith to be assured.²⁶ "Obedience to God," "love for one's neighbor," etc. are unfailing signs of true faith in those who are "ange-

²² Ritschl wrote, "Spener repudiated both the conflict of penitence and the testing of justification by feeling (underlining mine); and taught instead that we have to assure ourselves of the vitality of our faith and the certainty of our justification through the practice and the consciousness of moral action." Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 163. This conclusion is in the large born out by the discussion above, but the statement "Spener repudiated...the testing of justification by feeling" cannot stand without qualification.

²³ Hirsch, II, p. 150.

²⁴ Theologische Bedencken, I, p. 180; see also II, p. 817.

²⁵ Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 169-170; see also Theologische Bedencken, II, pp. 388-389.

²⁶ Ibid., III, pp. 135-136.

fochten" and geangsteten" about the Unempfindlichkeit of their faith.²⁷

The third question to which those raised by "prove your Wiedergeburt" and Empfindlichkeit point is that of certainty. Spener was convinced all certainty of salvation arose out of experience. In fact the question of whether believers were personally assured of their salvation or not arose for the first time in Pietism. Ultimately the answer Pietism gave to this question described an individually attained assurance of salvation dependent on the achievement of sanctity, an "empirical advance in piety."²⁸

Spener was also convinced the believer's certainty could hold its ground in the face of Anfechtung and doubt.²⁹ At the same time he was quick to say "one does not come to certainty without many struggles."³⁰ In Anfechtung faith is made unempfindlich. However when a believing child of God is angefochten, he does not therefore fall out of divine grace, but remains a child of God and his salvation remains assured.³¹

Assurance must be present in the Christian. Even when hidden in Unempfindlichkeit and Angst, his longing for grace out of Anfechtung is a sure sign of assurance. The angefochten, though they do not perceive them, still

²⁷ Theologische Bedencken, II, pp. 813-814; see also I, pp. 323-324, II, p. 388. Later the pietist Joachim Lange sought a distinction between Empfindung and Erfahrung. Faith can certainly exist for a time without Empfindung, but it is bound to experience, for experience is the sphere in which practical matters are to be known. Rotermund, p. 28.

²⁸ Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 157-158, see also I pp. 513-514; Harrisville, R.A. "the New Birth" The New Community In Christ, Ed. Burtness, J.H. and Kildahl, J.P., Minneapolis, 1963, p. 92.

²⁹ Theologische Bedencken, II, pp. 812-813; Hirsch, II, pp. 104, 107.

³⁰ Theologische Bedencken, II, p. 392, III, p. 137.

³¹ Ibid., II, p. 391; Drei christliche Predigten von Versuchungen sonderlich von der Anfechtung, Frankfurth am Main, 1712, pp. 232-234, see also pp. 208-209, 223-224, hereafter abbreviated von Versuchungen.

have many Empfindungen of divine love.³² When angefochten they should look to the fruits of faith to be assured (versichern) that they belong in grace. Obedience to God, love for one's neighbor, an aversion for the worldly are unfailing signs of true faith, when one is angefochten and geängsteten about the Unempfindlichkeit of faith.³³

MORTIFICATION

Spener spoke of mortification much as Luther had. The old man and the "fleshly nature" still remain in the Christian. He must learn to kill the flesh that is in him, to combat it, and to crucify it, until he is free.¹ Thus even the wiedergeboren Christian leads a double life.²

Among Christians the struggle of the spirit and the flesh remains and they always have their old man to crucify and put to death and the new man to draw more fully forth: without (this struggle) they cannot remain in the Wiedergeburt.³

The lack of mortification, as knowledge of sin and a real putting aside of it, is the reason so few men are really wiedergeboren. They want to come to faith and the forgiveness of sins and still remain in their sins. There-

³² Theologische Bedencken, II, pp. 391, 815.

³³ Ibid., III, p. 136, II, p. 814; see also Hirsch, II, pp. 150-151.

¹ von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 14, 27-30, see also p. 192.

² Ibid., pp. 37-38, 216, 220-221.

³ Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 120-122; see also pp. 406-407, 410.

fore they come neither to faith nor to justification nor to a new nature.⁴

This putting to death takes place through daily repentance. It is the Christian's duty to throw off his sins in repentance, to "resist" them, "regret" them, "oppose" them, and "never again commit them willingly."⁵

Spener spoke about the "means" of mortification as these: a) the law out of which knowledge of sin comes, b) the gospel which awakens love for God and shame at having offended him with our sins, c) the cross the Christian bears which crucifies the old man more and more, and d) from man's side, a "diligent and daily investigation of his life according to the law and gospel."⁶

In the main this teaching on mortification did not depart significantly from Luther's position. Mortification was very important to Pietism, in fact it may be said Pietism was preoccupied with mortification. However one cannot read the literature of Pietism without being impressed by the fact that the whole is conceived anthropocentrically. Mortification is something the Christian should be "active" and "diligent" about, in contrast with the "dead," (i.e. inactive) buchstäbliche faith of Orthodoxy. The reader has the distinct impression that mortification is conceived as part of a program of sanctification, the goal of which is "perfection" and "certainty."

The difference between mortification as part of such a program and Luther's view is clear. For Luther condemnatio sui must include all that is human, even the "fruits of faith" so precious to Pietism. When the

⁴ von der Wiedergeburt, p. 154; see also p. 155; Theologische Bedencken, III pp. 230-231.

⁵ Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 410-411; see also pp. 61-62.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 411-412.

Christian exercises self-condemnation as part of a program of sanctification, he simply produces a publican's pride in his own humility and self-accusation. This was a real problem for Luther, because it had been a real problem in the monasteries, and he solved it. It was a real problem for Pietism as well, but was not understood as such and no solution was found. For Luther mortification cannot be self-achieved, can never be a human act. The opus alienum is always God's work. This was Luther's theocentric answer to the problem.⁷

God places real suffering upon the Christian in Anfechtung through the law and the cross. There is no need for the "mortifying practices" of the monks or the pietists. In his own day, Luther struggled against the Enthusiasts who began with mortification as a "prerequisite" for justification and the Christian life. This he regarded as a reestablishing of the way of works. Here the movement was once again from earth heavenward. Mortification was made the work of man. This was the difference between their anthropocentric view and his theocentric one.⁸

ANFECHTUNG

One of the conclusions we have formed in this study is that two of the themes most basic to Luther's theology of the opus alienum Dei gradually disappeared through the century and a half rule of Orthodoxy: Anfechtung

⁷Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 6-7.

⁸Ibid., pp. 145-146, 252-254.

and the cross of the Christian. In the former case the term, with its specific meaning, disappeared and such consideration as was given to the subject matter was subsumed under the topic of contrition. In the latter case it was treated as of less and less importance until it simply disappeared. We have already noted that their reappearance in Pietism represented the new interest in the subjective (Erfahrung) half of Luther's dialectic.

Spener specifically referred to Luther's dictum that Anfechtung was the school in which theologians were forged.⁹ There was no doubt in Spener's mind that the Christian must often be subjected to the "Probe," be exercised in Anfechtungen, and "feel the punishment of his conscience."¹⁰ Becoming a child of God cannot take place without many "birth-pangs."¹¹ Under the title: "Pains Necessary In Penitence, And Not To Hasten After Trost,"¹² Spener wrote that neither the death of the old man nor the birth of the new can take place without attendant pain. In fact the loss of consolation (Trostlosigkeit) can often effect more good than its opposite. In the same way, "Trost before the time" may be less useful to the Christian than a long period of Angst after which a true Trost may come.

There is a painful feeling of sin, "the true Angsten of hell and all the floods of wrath flow over the soul." The angefochtene conclude they are no longer in grace because they feel the wrath of God so strongly.¹³

⁹Theologische Bedencken, II, p. 712. In fact, he also remarked here that God had not sent him many Anfechtungen because He knew his weakness. See also Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰Theologische Bedencken, II, pp. 387-388; von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 168-169.

¹¹Theologische Bedencken, III, p. 140.

¹²The title to Articulus I, Distinctio III, Sectio XXXVI, and the following sentences, Ibid., III, pp. 475-476.

¹³Ibid., II, p. 686; see also I, p. 339.

The state of Anfechtung has begun

when a righteous Christian must suffer, with God's gracious leave, the fact that the Evil Enemy inspires godless, blasphemous thoughts continually, against his will, but especially when he prays, considers God's Word, goes to Holy Communion, or wants to perform some holy deed; interjects doubt as to whether or not there is a God, whether or not Christianity is mere folly and a human invention; excites all kinds of desires for all kinds of sins, and when a man fights against them, continues to torment him even further, so that the wide world becomes too narrow for him, and he cannot pray or raise his heart to God with devotion as before, feels no consolation or ardent love toward God in his soul, but only anxiety and doubting and despairing thoughts toward God and His holy Word.¹⁴

We have already noted that angefochtenen Christians often do not perceive (empfinden) "divine grace and faith" in their hearts for a time. Instead they feel only unbelief and opposition to God which plunges them into the "anxieties of hell" (Höllengesten) in which they are capable only of "longing" for grace and faith.¹⁵ In fact when God withdraws His support so that Prüfung may take place, the Christian falls into doubt and everything

¹⁴ von Versuchungen, pp. 111-112.

¹⁵ Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 170-171.

he was sure of before is found not only unsure but false, and even the memory of the certainty he knew before doubt entered his soul in Anfechtung cannot be recalled.¹⁶ Faith becomes unempfindlich through doubt and only the "inexpressible sighs" of the angefochtene for grace form a basis for assurance.¹⁷ It is the "most common lament" of God-fearing souls suffering Anfechtung that their faith has become unempfindlich. Let them understand then that their obedience to God, love for their neighbor, preference for the "state of grace to all worldly good fortune," their longing "sighs" to God are "unfailing signs" of true faith. As we have already noted Spener said that when faith can no longer be perceived a priori, the Christian must conclude it a posteriori.¹⁸

Spener distinguished two kinds of Anfechtungen: good temptations which come from God and evil ones which come from Satan, the world, and the flesh. When Christians pray, "lead us not into temptation," they do not entreat to be delivered from the former but from the latter. God who is goodness itself does not tempt to evil but only to good that He may test the Christian's obedience and faith.¹⁹ If we say God does not effect evil Anfechtungen, He nevertheless has a part in them. If not one hair of His children can fall contrary to His will, no Anfechtung can confront them without His leave. The evil Anfechtungen of Satan, the world, and the flesh could not take place

¹⁶Theologische Bedencken, I, p. 55.

¹⁷Ibid., II, p. 391.

¹⁸Ibid., II, p. 807-808, 814, 818. This whole issue of the loss of Empfindlichkeit in Anfechtung possesses striking similarities to the "dry" periods the mystics report alternating with their empfindliche religious experiences.

¹⁹Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 361-362; von Versuchungen, pp. 91-93.

without His permission, but they may be attributed to God only in this sense. Still God does not give Satan freedom to do with the Christian what he wishes in Anfechtung. God sets limits, lest he be lost. He will not permit Satan to tempt the Christian beyond what is good for him. God withholds His grace and consolation for a time, not because He wants to see the Christian plagued, but only for his good. His condition requires bitter medicine for its cure.²⁰

The evil Anfechtungen come from Satan, the world, and the flesh.²¹ If the Christian is in danger, want, or need, they tempt him to "distrust" of God, to "doubt and faint-heartedness." If on the contrary it is going well with the Christian, they tempt him to "presumption, pride, and defiance" of God.²² Above all they see their chance in the sicher Christian who is aware of neither "war nor enemy."²³

The question of the author or authors of Anfechtungen is closely related to the question of terminology. Luther's term was Anfechtung which means "attack" or "contest" and the particular meaning he gave it was coined by himself. God is always the subject of Anfechtung, although He may use Satan, the world, or the flesh to achieve His purposes. The word Anfechtung appears to have been an embarrassment to virtually every one else. We have noted Melancthon's term was "terrors of conscience." The title of Spenser's book devoted entirely to the subject is instructive for his usage: Drei

²⁰ von Versuchungen, pp. 93-101, 113-114, 127-130, 169-170.

²¹ Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 363-364, 367-368; von Versuchungen, pp. 40-49.

²² Ibid., p. 53.

²³ Ibid., pp. 115-122, 160-164.

christliche Predigten von Versuchungen sonderlich von der Anfechtung. In both title and contents Anfechtung was subsumed under the more general and ambiguous term Versuchung. Spener seems more comfortable with the latter which simply means temptation as the word is commonly used. Along with this there is a subtle shift of emphasis. For Spener what was involved was more often a temptation (Versuchung) by Satan to evil thoughts and deeds than an assault (Anfechtung) by God upon the faith of the Christian. This did two things: moralized the concept which made it more anthropocentric, and failed to emphasize Anfechtung as a part of the opus alienum Dei. It would appear that Luther's strange word was not indifferent usage but a careful and selective usage. Anfechtung possesses no moral content whatever and, as Luther used it, could have only God as its subject.²⁴

Spener continues. When God permits Anfechtungen to take place He, as it were, withdraws His support. He permits a Probe to take place, not because He does not know what is in a man, but to bring him to self-knowledge.²⁵ He does not love men^{less} because this is so. Instead He teaches men their depravity, humility before Himself and their neighbors, high esteem for His grace, consolation in His Word, avoidance of sin, a willingness to suffer, and a desire to withdraw from the world more and more.²⁶

Christians ought not to interpret Anfechtungen as indications that

²⁴In one place Spener wrote, "The first step for the angefochtene to take is to be certain that it is not God but the devil who is the author of such Anfechtung. von Versuchungen, p. 182.

²⁵Theologische Bedencken, I, p. 328, also II, pp. 743-744, 806; Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 362-363.

²⁶von Versuchungen, pp. 245-246; Theologische Bedencken, I, p. 329, II, p. 820.

God is angry with them and has rejected them but rather as assurances of their adoption by God.²⁷ It is certainly true these experiences are "heavier and more unbearable than any one who has not tasted them could think or believe," but they are necessary that the old man be put to death and the new man be brought to life.²⁸

God has His purposes in Anfechtung. a) First God brings the Christian to a knowledge of his sinful depravity and his great need. b) The Christian learns a whole new appreciation for God's gracious justification in that Anfechtung teaches him to cast away all hope in himself. c) Anfechtung exercises and strengthens faith. d) The Christian is driven to prayer. e) Anfechtung is the school which teaches humility better than any other. f) These experiences wipe "the sleep of security (Sicherheit)" out of the Christian's eyes. g) They teach the Christian to be patient when bearing the cross. h) Anfechtung awakens a desire for eternal life and a "holy longing" to depart this world.²⁹

Precisely when the Christian appears to be losing in Anfechtung out of his weakness, let him be assured he will not lose. The Christian conquers when he comes to know that victory over Anfechtungen is God's work not man's. When he prays, "lead us not into temptation, he prays then that God "preserve and keep, strengthen and stand by him, and grant that he conquer in His strength and power."³⁰

²⁷ von Versuchungen, pp. 59-60; Theologische Bedencken, II, pp. 809, 891.

²⁸ Ibid., II, pp. 742-743, 712.

²⁹ von Versuchungen, pp. 130-156, 170-173; Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 366-367.

³⁰ von Versuchungen, pp. 230-232, 160-168; Theologische Bedencken, I, pp. 339-340; Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 368-369.

The Christian may also contribute to victory by: a) relying less on an Empfindlichkeit of faith than on the Word alone (das blosse Wort); b) relying less on an Empfindlichkeit of faith than on evidence of "the fruits of faith;" c) recognizing God leads His saints on different paths but not without cause; d) believing the "dark way" of Anfechtung leads to "eternal light;" e) trusting for salvation to the mercy of God alone; f) recognizing he is merely one in a communion of many thousand Christian brothers and sisters who experience similar sufferings; and g) waiting with patience empfindlichen grace and his final redemption.³¹

All this represents a rich doctrine of Anfechtung which was a conscious attempt to return to Luther's emphasis on this theme and even to go beyond him. However we cannot permit the position of Pietism on this issue to remain unchallenged. Pietism's principal historian proceeded in this way. Melancthon had prescribed "terrors of conscience" as a necessary presupposition of faith. It would follow from this that if "terrors of conscience" do not arise out of one's life situation, they would have to be intentionally created. This inference Johann Arndt had already drawn from the mystics of the Middle Ages.³² It was August Hermann Francke who first insisted on pains of contrition as a "precondition" of faith. "Individual certainty of salvation" was to be achieved in "penitential exercise."³³ The Halle Pietists inquired "whether their faith was sufficiently strong" and whether

³¹ Theologische Bedencken, II, pp. 816-817; see also Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 369-370; von Versuchungen, pp. 79-87, 173-182, 190-199.

³² Ritschl, Geschichte des Pietismus, II, pp. 111-112.

³³ Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 162, I, pp. 330-331, 513-514.

to be certain of forgiveness "a particular shade of sorrow was required." Ultimately assurance of justification was made to depend upon an experience of conversion. Ritschl cited Francke's own "hypochondriacal struggle" as typical.³⁴ Still later assurance of salvation was made dependent on being able to supply "the date and exact circumstances" of an experience of regeneration. This was "as absurd," wrote Ritschl, "as to say that one cannot rightly consider himself a man unless he is conversant with the fact and the laws of his own procreation."³⁵

In this presentation of Ritschl's the burden of criticism would appear to fall on the later Pietists and the excesses to which their work led.

Spener repudiated both the conflict of penitence (the Busskampf) and the testing of justification by feelings; and taught instead that we have to assure ourselves of the vitality of our faith and the certainty of our justification through the practice and the consciousness of moral action.³⁶

This may be true on the face of it, but it is to miss the point. For Spener's constant reiteration of the counsel: prove your Wiedergeburt, which in this study we have seen as one of the key themes in Spener's theology, produced morbid introspection and Anfechtungen aplenty. However it was not the opus alienum Dei which produced them, but the quest for personal holiness, for growth in personal sanctification. This is to say the Pietists did not wait

³⁴Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 141-142; Ritschl, Geschichte des Pietismus, II, p.250 ff.; Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 155-156.

³⁵Ibid., I, pp. 514-515, 517; III, pp. 654-655.

³⁶Ibid., III, p. 163, and again pp. 164-165.

upon God, for such Anfechtungen as He might send them, but embraced a program of sanctification which must necessarily produce them. Luther took Anfechtung far too seriously to believe it should ever be "chosen." Like "self-chosen" crosses, chosen Anfechtungen are altogether anthropocentric and hence leave no place for the opus alienum Dei.

Thus the Prüfung of the Christian's Wiedergeburt was Anfechtung-producing and as it effect made Anfechtung thoroughly anthropocentric. Valentin E. Lüsscher (1673-1749) warned about exactly this outcome. He believed the continual striving after perfection in sanctification imposed an unbearable weight on Christians which could only ultimately result in doubt and despair.³⁷

A very great deal is said about Anfechtung throughout Theologische Bedencken and all of Spener's writings. Much of what was written was for the encouragement of what Spener called in one place the "Trauergeist."³⁸ It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that all the attention given to the Prüfung of the genuineness of a man's faith, the "living" nature of it, the degree of his growth in piety, produced a situation in which Spener's followers were continually and unmercifully subjecting themselves to an inward "Probe." All the attention was focused on the individual and his inner life, feelings, and experience. Such introspection readily becomes morbid, or in Marholz's phrase, "brooding self-contemplation."³⁹ Is my Bekehrung genuine? Have I repented enough? Is my faith a living one? Are the fruits

³⁷ Rotermund, p. 64.

³⁸ Theologische Bedencken, II, p. 891.

³⁹ Marholz, p. 6.

of my faith sufficient? Is my progress in sanctification proceeding as it should?⁴⁰ Attention shifted to empirical moral attainment and various means for measuring it. The whole was entrapped in human subjectivity.⁴¹

Such experiences of remorse and penitence created by continual prüfen inevitably were human accomplishments.⁴² Yet the one thing the Christian cannot do with the opus alienum Dei is choose it, as Luther insisted. For as soon as the Christian chooses it he is one with the monastic asceticism of the Middle Ages, and it is no longer the opus alienum Dei. If chosen, it is self-initiated, even under certain circumstances artificially constructed, and thus prostrated into something wholly anthropocentric.⁴³

LAW

Spener's conception of the law begins in the customary Lutheran pattern. In discussing the second use of the law, he wrote, if the Word of God is to be properly received, the ground must first be broken as when seed is planted. It is the law which first breaks the ground in bringing the heart to a

⁴⁰ One is reminded of Luther's struggle for certainty of salvation on these terms in the monastery and his failure to attain it. It was precisely his failure to attain it on this basis which led to his rediscovery of the gospel and thus to the Reformation itself.

⁴¹ In another place Ritschl would appear to agree with this analysis, tracing what has been termed here, the Prüfung of the Christian's Wiedergeburt, from Spener back to Johann Arndt. Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 162; see also Niebuhr, II, p. 170; McGiffert, pp. 159-160.

⁴² Alen, The Faith Of The Christian Church, p. 299.

⁴³ See also on this point Barth, Karl, The Epistle To The Romans, E.T. from the sixth ed. by Hoskyns, E.C., London, 1933, pp. 109-110, 324.

knowledge and hatred of sin. Many men never come to the Wiedergeburt because they remain in their old life, the soil has never been broken. Where this happens, the preaching of the gospel can effect nothing.¹ The second use of the law shows man the seriousness of sin, convicts him, and punishes him so that he may feel the divine wrath and be terrified. Then he loses hope in his own activity and seeks grace and salvation in Christ alone. This "schoolmasterly" function continues in Christians throughout their lives because the flesh which makes men secure (sicher) remains in them.²

More attention, however, was given to the third use of the law. Spener wrote, we are not delivered from obedience to God's commandments through Christ but only from the curse of the law and its compulsion.³ Christ has not freed the Christian from the obligation and duty of living a holy life according to the law. In fact His grace drives us all the more to it and in this sense the gospel does not abolish the law.⁴

The third use of the law shows the Christian what God requires of him, because God wishes his goodness to conform to His commandments. There is nothing in the Christian's entire life which does not have to be regulated by the rule of God's commandments. The third use of the law prescribes the standard which Christian obedience takes as its own and also provides the basis for that "diligent and daily" investigation the Christian conducts into his standing before God on the basis of the law and the gospel.⁵

¹ von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 104-105; see also p. 220; Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 411-412, 133.

² Ibid., pp. 154, 281.

³ von der Wiedergeburt, p. 247.

⁴ Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 13-16, 133.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 135-137, 281, 411-412.

It should first be noted that the third use of the law predominates in Spener over the second use. The reader sees less of the law as "the hammer of God" in Spener's writings than in Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy. Instead the dominant theme is the Prüfung of the Christian's Wiedergeburt which Prüfung necessarily takes place according to the third use.

Second, the gospel is understood as one of the means of mortification. The old man may also be put to death by

consideration of the divine blessings which come from
the gospel which awaken love for God and also shame and
sorrow that we have offended Him with our sins.⁶

For Spener, when the proclamation is addressed to man, its starting point ought not to be in the demands and threats of the law, but in the gospel of God's unending love. The law does not effect a true repentance, but only a false, outward one.⁷

The second use of the law was not here entirely eliminated by Spener, but the decisive cause of repentance was the gospel. The Christian is motivated to repentance chiefly by his sadness at offending his dear heavenly Father. The proclamation of the law was circumscribed by and subordinated to the proclamation of the gospel. Hirsch writes that this was thoroughly "modern," for a God of law and judgment was subsumed under the conception of His love, and that this was a "revolutionary change" in the history of theology.⁸

Whenever the third use of the law predominates over the second a

⁶Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 411-412.

⁷Hirsch, II, pp. 141-143.

⁸Ibid.

certain legalism is necessarily the result. This is precisely the difference between Luther and Spener on the doctrine of the law: the law's chief function is no longer to drive to repentance but instead to supply a guide for life. The legalism which necessarily follows is clearly seen in Pietism's continually measuring the wiedergeboren Christian by his fruits and then arguing back from these empirical fruits to the existence of faith and the assurance of salvation in him. Such legalism is always anthropocentric, always a kind of self-salvation.

The preponderance of the third use of the law over the second is also a denial of the opus alienum Dei, as is ultimately the subsuming of the wrath of God too completely under His love. Luther's powerful dialectic of wrath/love, opus alienum/opus proprium Dei, law/gospel, old man/new man, death/life was again destroyed on the soil of Lutheranism.

THE CROSS OF THE CHRISTIAN

We have already had occasion to note that one of the major themes in Luther's theology of the opus alienum Dei, progressively lost during the century and a half reign of Lutheran Orthodoxy and restored by Pietism, was Anfechtung. The second was the cross of the Christian. Both restorations represent Pietism's interest in the subjective half of Luther's dialectic and therefore in the "younger" Luther. The recovery of the cross of the Christian theme was genuine and appears conspicuously not only in Spener's work but also in that of A. H. Francke and that of Pietism general-

ly.¹

The cross which the Christian must bear is needed because of the strength of the old man who must be put to death. God sends the cross precisely because the Christian needs such discipline.² He crucifies the old man that love for the world may be extinguished in the Christian, that faith and its fruits may be "tested" (geprüft), and that the Christian may be conformed to the image of His Son.³

God has an important purpose in sending the cross and the Christian never outgrows his need for his Lord's chastisement (Züchtigung) as long as he lives.⁴ His purpose is sanctification. The Christian's sufferings have no merit, but nevertheless contribute to salvation in that they further faith and sanctification. Both are not only "tested" (geprüft) through the cross but also strengthened. God seeks to further sanctification that the Christian may share in His holiness. The Christian should be holy as God is holy. However he is not holy by nature but needs to be sanctified, that is to lay aside the old man and to grow in the new man. The cross of the Christian contributes especially to the first part of sanctification, in

¹See e.g. Francke, A.H., Nicodemus; or a Treatise Against The Fear Of Man, Third Ed., E.T. Bath, 1801, pp. 1-87. Also A Guide To The Reading And Study Of The Holy Scriptures, E.T. Jaques, W., Third Ed., London, 1819, pp. 110-111.

²von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 389, 374.

³Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 411-412; 372-374. Spener wrote of three kinds of "chastisement" which God may send men. The first is τιμωρία which God sends as a righteous judge to punish those who wantonly sin and stand outside His grace. The second is μαρτύριον which is suffering as a testimony. The third is παιδεία which is chastisement God sends His children to remind them of their sins. von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 370-372.

⁴Ibid., p. 380.

combating evil habits and lusts and thereby making way for the second part.⁵ The Christian continues to benefit from the cross in that it reminds him of the seriousness of former sins and teaches him to be on his guard lest he return to such sins again. In this way the cross may be a "correction" and a "saving affliction."⁶

Lutheran Orthodoxy had concerned itself very little with the cross of the Christian. With its "objective" emphasis all the interest was centered in the cross of Christ and its all-sufficiency. There was no place for a cross of the Christian by which subjective considerations might compromise the Orthodox position on justification. On the other hand "conformity" to Christ in His humiliation and glorification was essential for Spener. The old ideal of imitatio Christi was renewed.

If he desire to be conformed (gleichförmig) to his Lord in His glory, the Christian ought not complain of knowing humiliation and of bearing his cross after Him.⁷ Suffering, renunciation, even abnegation are part of the Nachfolge of Christ. These are not punishments but means of sanctification which contribute toward victory over one's self and the world. However there is something ascetic about this. In this context the cross as suffering and abnegation is seen intimately related to renunciation and withdrawal from worldly pleasures and earthly cares.⁸

Ritschl called this a "verification" of Christ's satisfaction in religious experience. "we are crucified with Him." The death of Christ is seen

⁵ von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 378-382; Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 281-282.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 312-313, 374.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 272-273.

⁸ Gass, II, p. 445.

"mirrored in the crucifixion of the sins of the believer."⁹

Spener also had a great deal to say about how the Christian should bear the cross when it comes to him. When the cross comes let the Christian not cast it from him or flee from it, but take it up willingly and endure it with patience. Let him remember the words, "If any one will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt. 16:24) When the Christian looks to "Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who... endured the cross..." (Heb. 12:2,3), he is strengthened lest he grow weary or faint-hearted. When the Christian recalls His suffering, he sees his own suffering as little compared with that borne guiltlessly by his Lord and he does not complain.¹⁰

Because the cross cannot come to the Christian against God's will, it cannot be too difficult for him or last too long.¹¹ While it may appear that God has retreated far from him, actually He is not distant but much closer to the Christian in suffering. After all, God is not "an enemy," but deals with the Christian as a Father with His children. He chastises His children because they have need of discipline, but it is a discipline that arises out of love. Let the Christian bear it with "childlike pati-

⁹Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 551, 555.

The same theme was carried on by A.H. Francke who consistently spoke of the imitatio Christi together with an ascetic withdrawal from the world.

The bonds and wounds of Christians are the bonds and wounds of Christ.

A Guide To The Reading And Study Of The Holy Scriptures, pp. 110-111.

He that would enter into a thoroughly self-denying life...must often set before his eyes the vanity and even nothingness of this transitory world...

¹⁰Nicodemus, p. 54; see also pp. iv, vii, x, 4, 37, 50, 60, 64-67, 86-87.

¹¹von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 383-384, 393, 396-397.

Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, p. 374.

ence."¹² Earthly parents chastise their children because they love them and wish to "further their welfare." In the same way God becomes the Christian's Father in the Wiedergeburt and evidences His love for him by disciplining him. As the Christian obeyed his earthly parents, let him accept the discipline of his "spiritual Father." God is a gracious Father full of love for His children and even His discipline comes from "a fatherly heart."¹³

The Christian ought to accept the cross willingly because God has every right to exercise it. He is his Creator and Lord from whom everything has come. The Christian ought also ^{to} bear the cross in patience because of the love he has for his "dear Father." Let him bear the cross as something that comes to him from "hands that he loves."¹⁴

The Christian knows that to be conformed to the image of Christ will involve much suffering and that only through it will he enter into glory. Therefore he understands that the cross is not a sign of God's displeasure (Ungrnade), and he is able to see through the "clouds of wrath" to the countenance of God "full of grace."¹⁵

However the patience this requires has degrees. The lowest is when a man would gladly be free of his cross. The next degree is represented by the man who has no joy at the cross, but who has conquered the flesh sufficiently that he is content with the divine will. The highest degree is when a Christian not only takes his cross willingly upon himself, but also thanks God for it, and glories and rejoices in it.¹⁶

¹² von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 372-377.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 377, 383-388.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 390-391.

¹⁵ Echoing Luther here, see p. 18 above.

¹⁶ Again echoing Luther, von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 391-395.

Like Luther, Spener cautioned that the cross is not to be chosen or made for oneself. The Christian is to await it and only when it is proffered take it upon himself and bear it patiently.¹⁷

While Spener sincerely sought to return to Luther and recover a doctrine of the cross of the Christian which Orthodoxy had neglected, and while his work represented a genuine rediscovery of this theme, his own particular stamp was on it. The Christian was told, while suffering itself is not a sign of adoption by God, it is a sign of the Wiedergeburt when it is obediently and patiently borne. No one is a child of God if the cross is lacking in him. Contrariwise, if a Christian bears the cross he has a mark of the certainty of his adoption.¹⁸

Where Christians bear the cross with obedience, "God attests them as His children." Those who avoid the cross similarly prove they are not His children.¹⁹ Thus Spener made bearing the cross "patiently" a means of "testing" the Christian's Wiedergeburt. He wrote further, let us prove whether we have the new man or not. The cross came upon you. "How did you find your heart?" Were you content with your heavenly Father or "indignant" with Him because of it? Were you impatient, murmuring against God? Have you opposed God's will in sending the cross? Did you dictate to God the time and manner of your deliverance?

See all this will show whether you are born of God or not, for the new birth always has patience accompanying

¹⁷Theologische Bedencken, I, p. 330; von der Wiedergeburt, p. 393.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 372-374, 376-377.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 386-387.

it; also you will know how strong or weak the new man
is in you.²⁰

A key theme in Spener's theology, Prüfung, arises in the doctrine of the cross as well. The Wiedergeburt can be attested by patience in bearing the cross.

Four criticisms must briefly be directed against this view. a) The cross has sanctification as its chief purpose. This demonstrates clearly that sanctification has become the new organizing principle of Pietism, displacing justification. For Luther the cross of the Christian is part of God's opus alienum the purpose of which is to humble in order to prepare for the reception of the gospel. For Spener the purpose of the cross of the Christian is growth in measurable piety, something altogether anthropocentric. b) Luther's conformatio Christi as crucifixion (mortification) and resurrection (vivification) is the effect of the opus alienum and opus proprium Dei. It is totally theocentric. Spener's imitatio Christi and ascetic withdrawal from the world, superficially similar, is uncomfortably medieval, monastic, and wholly anthropocentric. c) Spener gives a great deal of attention to what the Christian should look like who is bearing the cross. Attention shifts to man's role, man's performance, what the Christian ought to do and how he ought to conduct himself. There is a great deal of self-reflection involved. d) The Prüfung of the Wiedergeburt which cross-bearing provides is defined according to wholly human criteria and becomes a judgment pronounced by man upon his own progress in piety.

²⁰ von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 395-397.

FAITH AND PIETY

One may easily become blinded to the obvious, but Pietism is a very significant name. It was a movement for which piety or sanctification and its Prüfung became central. Since Luther the centrality of the conception of faith had been the universal mark of Protestants. But in Pietism the accent moved from faith to piety.¹

The relationship between faith and piety in Pietism lays bare its special character. It is also true that the differences between Orthodoxy and Pietism become apparent when this relationship is studied. It has been our finding here that this relationship was falsely conceived in Pietism.²

We have noted that it is not a "new theology" one uncovers in Pietism. All the terminology and the structure of late Lutheran Orthodoxy remained, but it was filled with new meanings. There can be little question but that the new center was no longer Glaube but Wiedergeburt.

Symptomatically the definition of faith was altered. Spener wrote, "Faith is the changing (Änderung) and rebirth (wiedergebähre) of the whole man."³ Elsewhere, "I know of only one faith which saves...that (which) creates entirely different men(gantz andern Menschen)."⁴ "Faith (is), as it were, the soul of the new man."⁵ This is simply to define faith as a gantz andern Mensch, or to say faith equals Wiedergeburt.

We have already noted Pietism failed to maintain Luther's dialectic, in effect denying its "objective" half. It embraced Begegnung with God

¹Rotermund, p. 26.

²Ibid., pp. 114-116, 26.

³Theologische Bedencken, III, p. 230.

⁴Ibid., II, p. 377.

⁵Ibid., II, p. 388.

in experience, but denied the Word. It had no real interest in theology. Experience was central and the Word as objective relegated to second place. In this it became guilty of all the excesses of the Schwärmer against whom Luther clarified the objective half of his dialectic in his own time. Spener clearly understood the nature of his difference from Orthodoxy here. He berated it for its trust in the "understanding" and placed his own view beside it as an Änderung of the whole man.⁶

The definition of faith is crucial. Luther held together the objective Word God speaks to man with the Begegnung which takes place between God and man through it. Orthodoxy defined faith as holding reine Lehre. Pietism defined it as Wiedergeburt. There were many shifts of accent here: from faith to piety, from justification to Wiedergeburt, from simul justus et peccator to a sinlessness and moral perfection the Christian could all but attain.⁷

In addition faith was closely allied with experience. In one place Spener wrote,

where faith is real, (1) one experiences true repentance, knows his sins and hates them..., and experiences heavy Ängsten and sorrows over them; (2) one experiences not only the fruits of repentance but also the beginning of a life which seeks to please God; and (3)...one meets many Anfechtungen which belong to the true character of the children of God who are often exercised in these

⁶ Theologische Bedencken, II, p. 378.

⁷ Roßermund, p. 67.

Proben.⁸

The contrast with Luther is clear. Faith simply may not be equated with subjective experience. Piety and faith must be distinguished. Faith cannot be made dependent on subjective feelings, emotions, experiences.⁹

Pietism continually went beyond "faith alone" into the realm of religious experience which "tastes" and "feels."¹⁰ Faith which is "faith not sight" was here taken possession of by a faith which "experiences," "tastes," "feels," and finally "merges" (unio mystica) into God.¹¹

It is perfectly true Spener taught Empfindlichkeit might be lost to faith in Anfechtung. But his counsel was, when this happens, let the Christian build on the Empfindlichkeit of the "fruits of faith."¹² If the Christian is no longer conscious of faith because his faith is angefochten, let him look to the fruits of faith, his Wiedergeburt and its evidences in sanctification.

When we confront this kind of thinking we can appreciate Luther's insistence that faith cannot be made dependent on experience, but is contrary to all "greifen" and "fühlen," all sensus.¹³ Faith and experience dare not simply be identified. Faith and sight stand at opposite poles. What can be seen cannot be an object of faith. This was part of Luther's classic definition of faith. It is the same with the Christian life. It can never be fully identified with the empirical life the Christian leads. It is an ob-

⁸Theologische Bedenken, II, pp. 387-388, underlining mine.

⁹Rotermund, pp. 107, 29.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 100. In his critique of Pietism Valentin Löcher rightly saw in this the proof of the influx of mysticism into Pietism.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 105-106.

¹²E.g. Theologische Bedenken, II, p. 388.

¹³Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 120, 44; Rotermund, p. 30.

ject of faith and as such hidden. It is not an object of experience. The new man is hidden by the old.¹⁴ Luther was very clear about it.

SIMUL JUSTUS ET PECCATOR

While Spener had relatively little to say about Luther's simul justus et peccator, the conception cannot be said to be entirely absent from his writings. He wrote even the wiedergeborenen Christian is not entirely "new." A beginning has been made, the "rule" of the old nature has been weakened and taken away. However the Christian is always a "double man," the "old vice" remains side by side with the new nature.¹ St. Paul also teaches the day by day dying of the outward man and renewal of the inner man. The struggle between them remains and the Christian must continue to crucify the old man and put him to death so that the new man may come forth.²

They are entirely contrary to each other; the old man follows his reason, the new is captive to obedience of Christ; the old man has desire only for evil and aversion for good, the new however hates the evil and loves the good; the old man seeks himself in all things, the new denies himself and seeks his God's honor and the best for his neighbor; the old builds his existence on

¹⁴ von Loewenich, Luthers Theologia Crucis, pp. 98-99, 151-154.

¹ von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 213-214.

² Theologische Bedencken, I, p. 339; Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 120-122.

the earthly and temporal, the new strives for the spiritual and eternal alone and knows his salvation in the same: therefore there is constant war in the wiedergeboren in that the spirit (or new man) desires what is contrary to the flesh (the old man) and the flesh what is contrary to the spirit.³

In spite of these statements, however, there is other language which shows that simul justus et peccator was never taken seriously. One of the recurrent expressions here is that while both old man and new exist in the Christian, the old man no longer "rules." Following the Wiedergeburt the Christian becomes the "enemy of sin" and the "rule of sin" cannot remain in him.⁴ The "dominion" will be taken away from the old man of natural depravity.⁵ Where a man becomes "believing," "unbelief" can no longer rule.⁶ In one place Spener wrote, "We are fleshly or spiritual according to whether the flesh or the spirit has the upper hand."⁷ In all this Spener is saying faith cannot exist together with the "rule of sin" in the Christian.⁸

A second kind of language which leads in the same direction is that centering in Spener's continually emphasizing that the wiedergeboren Christian is a wholly changed man. This statement we have noted is typical, "the former wholly fleshly man becomes wholly changed, so that he is truly

³ Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, p. 407.

⁴ von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 103, 168, 214-215.

⁵ Erklärung der christlichen Lehre, pp. 120-122.

⁶ Theologische Bedencken, II, pp. 818-820.

⁷ Ibid., III, p. 231.

⁸ Hirsch, II, p. 145.

spiritual, even though he must still suffer the flesh awhile."⁹ This together with the continual striving to reach sinlessness and perfection makes Pietism's definition of the Christian the wholly changed man. What does simul justus et peccator mean in the context of this kind of language?

For Luther both old man and new man are predicates of the whole man. The old man is the man in rebellion against God, the man who in pride and security looks to himself. The new man is the man who looks to Christ. In Pietism the new man is identified with the converted man. The new man is the "completely changed" man. According to Luther the "new" in the Christian is Christ himself. Prenter writes,

In the pietistic preaching of conversion, the struggle between the old and the new man is a struggle between two different strata in man, the lower strata which comes from the life before conversion and the higher strata which comes by the life created by conversion. The struggle between the old and the new man is in Luther a struggle between Christ truly present in faith and our whole real self, including both the lower and the higher strata, both the converted and the unconverted parts of man.¹⁰

⁹Theologische Bedencken, III, p. 231; also e.g. von der Wiedergeburt, p.167.
¹⁰Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 67-68, also pp. 225-226; Bonhoeffer, Cost of Discipleship, p. 206, footnote 1. Anders Nygren points out that it was Pietism first interpreted the "I" in Romans 7: 14-25 as referring only to the unconverted. For Pietism it was inconceivable that Paul might speak in this way about the wiedergeboren life. Nygren, Anders, Romarbrevet, E.T. Commentary On Romans by Rasmussen, C.C., Philadelphia, 1949, pp. 284-285.

The Christian as "wholly changed," interpreted moralistically, is a "quantitative" denial of simul justus et peccator.

The third form of expression which denies the simul justus et peccator is Spener's insistence, despite protestations to the contrary, that one ought to be either old man or new man. The whole conversion and sanctification centered nature of his theology set the old man and new at opposite poles and emphasized an either/or in place of Luther's both/and.

The man who serves sin can have no communion with God. The Wiedergeburt cannot remain in such a man. If he serves sin, he "falls into his old birth again." Whoever serves sin is the "devil's child," "it is impossible that he can at the same time be the child of God."¹¹ When speaking of the old man and the new Spener's emphasis falls on the new man's displacing the old.¹²

In effect Spener spoke of a "saved state" and a "lost state," to have the Wiedergeburt or to lose it.¹³ This was Spener's distinctive way of speaking of simul justus et peccator. It was a denial. For being "lost" and being "saved" were seen as two stages in man's development. In later Pietism the Wiedergeburt was seen as something taking place at a definite time which could not be repeated. A daily death/life was here explicitly denied.¹⁴ However this view, if somewhat extreme, nevertheless grew from seed sown by Spener.

¹¹ von der Wiedergeburt, p. 143.

¹² E.g. Ibid., pp. 211-212.

¹³ See Theologische Bedencken, III, p. 231.

¹⁴ Köberle, p. 224.

These three forms of expression, taken together, deny the simul justus et peccator: a) in the wiedergeboren the old man has lost the "dominion" and the new man "rules," b) the wiedergeboren is a "wholly changed man," and c) one ought to be either old man or new man.

When the question of the ordo salutis¹⁵ is raised, it must be said that Spener accepted from Orthodoxy the "temporalization" of the process we have criticized. There was a shift in emphasis, but the form of the Orthodox ordo salutis remained. While Orthodoxy emphasized justificatio and illuminatio, the pietists emphasized conversio and renovatio.¹⁶ However the "temporalization" into successive stages was unchanged.

As Spener saw the ordo salutis it was a process through which the Christian was led by God step by step further into the Wiedergeburt and in a measurable growth in sanctity.¹⁷ The ordo salutis was "progress," different stages representing succeeding stages in the development of the religious man. This can be seen in the "introspective," the "self-conscious," and the "self-reflective" nature of the Prüfung of the Wiedergeburt. Nowhere in Pietism is the focus on the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei. Everywhere it is on the religious man and his "progress."

For Luther an ordo salutis was not a series of successive stages, but possessed unity in that it was all the work of God. His conception of the

¹⁵The term ordo salutis entered Lutheran dogmatics through Spener's influence. Hirsch, II, p. 116.

¹⁶It is interesting to note in this context that Spener and Pietism set out to bring illumination into closest possible juxtaposition with Wiedergeburt. In fact illuminatio was made dependent on Wiedergeburt. In this way the whole process was "psychologized." Hirsch, II, pp. 113-114;

¹⁷Rotermund, pp. 33, 34, 47, 52.

¹⁷Hirsch, II, p. 113.

opus alienum and opus proprium Dei gave unity to the whole which neither Orthodoxy nor Pietism could maintain because they viewed it almost entirely from the side of man, all their protestations notwithstanding. His was a "theocentric ordo salutis" which proceeds from heaven to earth, not an anthropocentric one of progressive sanctification proceeding from earth to heaven. The latter course would have been seen by Luther as the re-establishment of the way of works.¹⁸

ALIEN RIGHTEOUSNESS

The term "alien righteousness" quickly becomes familiar to any student of Luther. The term was used by Spener who spoke in this context of two kinds of righteousness. The righteousness with which the Christian stands before God is not an infused righteousness which is his own, but an alien (fremde) righteousness. However there is also another righteousness of the wiedergeboren worked by the Holy Spirit which may be brought before God by the Christian. However any righteousness of the Christian's is excluded from justification where only God's righteousness has any place.¹ This is to say Spener spoke of the alien righteousness of Christ, but he could not do so without also speaking about a "becoming righteous." With a certain ambiguity he sometimes confused the one with the other. God does not only "declare righteous" but also "infuses" righteousness, for "nothing happens

¹⁸Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 251-253.

¹von der Wiedergeburt, pp. 178-181; 223-226, 431.

for the sinner which does not at the same time take place in him."²

The basic conception which lies behind Luther's phrase, alien righteousness, was wholly foreign to Pietism. As we have noted at length "the very soul of Pietism" was its exaggerated esteem for conversion, its continual striving for growth in empirical sanctity, and its goal of the perfection and the sinlessness of the Christian. These all belong to the Christian's "own" righteousness and say nothing at all about the alien righteousness of Christ.³

The medieval theology and the German mystics saw justification/sanctification as a progressive infusion of grace.⁴ Luther⁵ took precisely the opposite point of view. When man is at his weakest,⁶ when all his "religion" has been cut out from under him, then it is possible for God to be mighty in him. The theology of the Middle Ages thought of grace as a new nature in man who is gradually changed from old man (the natural) into new man (the supernatural). Luther's simul justus et peccator was his radical criticism of quantitative progress from one level to another. His concept of sin made Hochmut and Sicherheit, which are most often "religious," the very heart of sin. It was in the monastery Luther learned that Hochmut is never stronger than when piously suppressing the "lower" nature. His answer

² And thus arrived at a certain "Oslandrism" as Gass rightly points out.

Gass, II, pp. 431-433.

³ von Loewenich, Die Geschichte der Kirche, p. 316. We may still underwrite Valentin Ißcher's criticism of Pietism at this point. Rotermond, pp. 63-64.

⁴ Küberle, p. 24.

⁵ In what follows the text is deeply indebted to Regin Prenter's brilliant argument in Spiritus Creator on this point.

⁶ Luther frequently thought of and referred to I Corinthians 1 in this context.

was alien righteousness, that is Christ Himself given to the Christian by God as a gift. This righteousness is always outside the Christian. The Christian's real self, the highest as well as the lowest, is under the judgment of God.⁷

The main lines of this medieval theology are also found in Pietism. In this view also the movement is from man to God. The wiedergeboren Christian increasing in sanctification and reaching for perfection is moving actively toward a God who is essentially passive. In Luther's view we have the direction of the Incarnation, God's active love coming to man dead in his sins.⁸

It may also be said that where the focus is on man's progress through stages of moral development, growth in sanctification, the view is necessarily anthropocentric. Where as with Luther the focus is on the opus alienum and opus proprium Dei the view is theocentric. It is after all not sanctification in man which provides the basis for justification (God's act), but it is justification which provides the basis for sanctification.⁹

Luther's conception of alien righteousness was His judgment on the kind of religion Pietism represented. In his view even the Christian's sanctification is part of the "whole man" who is old man and stands under the wrath of God. Everything that is man's own, including his religion, belongs to the old man. As soon as the new life in Christ ceases to be an alien righteousness and belongs to the Christian, it belongs to the old man. In this sense the Christian has nothing he calls his own, he always stands before

⁷Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 24-25, 39-40.

⁸Ibid., pp. 190-191, 201, 298.

⁹Aulen, The Faith Of The Christian Church, pp. 299-300; Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 491-492.

God as one who has nothing. The "new" in the new man is Christ Himself as an alien righteousness. The struggle between the old and the new man is the struggle between "Christ truly present in faith" and the Christian's whole real self, including his Wiedergeburt and sanctification. What belongs to the Christian's "real self" is always ambiguous. His Wiedergeburt and sanctification are the "fruit of the spirit" when the Christian looks only to the alien righteousness of Christ and trusts solely in the mercy of God. But this same Wiedergeburt and sanctification are "fruit of the flesh" when the Christian looks to himself and to these as his own appropriation. Therefore for Luther progress in sanctification¹⁰ means the Christian's "losing all that is his own" again and again to rely ever more fully on the alien righteousness of Christ his Lord.¹¹ Growth in sanctification is growth in reliance on the alien righteousness of Christ. Therefore it cannot be identified with an increase in empirical piety and it is in an important sense "hidden." In this way Luther's thought rejects the identification of the new man with the converted man.¹²

As Luther understood it, faith is an entirely new life. At the same time it is not and never will be the Christian's "own." It possesses "nothing in itself, but all things outside of itself in Christ." This new life judges the Christian's real self, his piety and whatever is his own as sinful. The Christian lives by an alien righteousness, a life hidden

¹⁰Which cannot be separated from justification in his view.

¹¹Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 32, 41, 45-46, 54, 66-69, 73-74.

¹²Ibid., pp. 80-81; Harrisville, p. 95.

with Christ in God.¹³

THEOLOGIA GLORIAE

Looking back over the description of Pietism in these pages it becomes clear that it represented the new anthropocentrism soon to explode in the Aufklärung. It took for its own the subjective, "experience" half of Luther's dialectic, while it was theologically and Confessionally indifferent. Wiedergeburt and sanctification became the new organizing principle, displacing faith and justification. The wiedergeborenen were to become entirely new persons, withdraw from the earthly, and press on toward the goal of perfection. They were to exercise Prüfung and find "certainty" in the "fruits of faith," i.e. in their growth in sanctity. All this is contained within the category of human experience and is therefore wholly anthropocentric.

One of the fundamental differences between Luther and Spener is Luther's clear distinction between the imitatio Christi and the confermitas Christi. The first is the work of man, the initiative is human, the Christian struggles to realize the ideal Christ represents. Imitation is human endeavor, an endeavor to build up one's piety so as to become more like Christ. However all human endeavor and all human piety are flesh and as such under the judgment of God. The Christian who sets out on the imitatio Christi fails to see that here his Lord's example is law which condemns him because he

¹³Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 41-42, 47, 50-51, 68-69, 98-99, 198.

cannot achieve "the thousandth part" of the image of Christ.¹

Conformitas Christi is the work of God in man. Here God is active and man is the recipient. The opus alienum Dei destroys any "certain possession" of Christ in "imitatio pietatis" and together with the opus proprium Dei conforms the Christian to the death and resurrection of Christ.²

Pietism must also be criticized for its attempt at self-salvation.³ Pietism wanted to do a work that was God's alone to do. It was frequently a "self-sanctification" which was practiced, a "sanctity of man's own choosing" the result. In effect the wiedergeborenen Christian was caught up in a program which involved pronouncing himself holy.⁴

The heavy emphasis on conversion and sanctification "experiences" led inevitably to their being artificially created when they did not arise of their own accord. Piety became a "tool" by which the Christian achieved self-transformation and self-salvation.⁵

The emphasis on Prüfung and the belief that the Christian could achieve

¹See Luther on this point, in the text above.

²Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 10-11, 25-28, 51, 120-121.

³In this context, the following statement of Tillich's is helpful. for the early Greek Church death and error were the things from which one needed and wanted to be saved. In the Roman Catholic Church salvation is from guilt and its consequences in this and the next life...In classical Protestantism salvation is from the law, its anxiety-producing and its condemning power. In Pietism and revivalism salvation is the conquest of the godless state through conversion and transformation for these who are converted. Systematic Theology, II, p. 166.

⁴Bonhoeffer, The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 140-141, 252-253; Rotermond, pp. 105-106.

⁵Tillich, Systematic Theology, II, pp. 85-86.

certainty of his Wiedergeburt on the basis of its "fruits" in sanctification was a dangerous position. It was reached because the pietists gave such importance to a "subjective assurance of salvation." The preoccupation with good works and moral growth, and the almost ascetic aversion ^{to} for the earthly were understood as marks of the "state of grace" and thus assured the Christian his Wiedergeburt was genuine.⁶

the argument which concludes from good works to the truth of the consciousness of justification by faith is very suspicious. We ought, we are told, to look away from the good works which we perform as regenerate, since they are always imperfect, and turn in faith to the perfection of Christ as the ground of our standing before God. And if, though we thus turn, we become the prey of uncertainty, we ought again to reflect that we still have good works, and have in them an evidence of our standing in grace. If this be so, it seems as though we might spare ourselves this roundabout route, and simply hold to the last-mentioned consideration.⁷

This is an "inversion" of the reformation point of view.⁸

Luther did not believe such "certainty" to be possible, except in the promises of God in His Word. Certainty could never be found in anything in the Christian. As we have already noted, the only certainty Luther knew is

⁶This kind of language may be clearly seen in Theologische Bedencken, I, pp. 323-324.

⁷Ritschl, Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 164.

⁸Ibid., I, pp. 514-515, III, pp. 84-85, 489-492.

reached when the Christian looks from himself to Christ. Uncertainty returns whenever he turns from Christ to look to himself again.

The opus alienum and opus proprium Dei Pietism made a work of its own. It created a whole program of sanctification designed to effect the death/life of the Christian in anthropocentric stages. The main focal points in this program were Wiedergeburt, sanctification, aversion for the earthly, Prüfung, "certainty," perfection. The proof of this is that the pietists "chose" the opus alienum Dei, i.e. in the creation of Anfechtungen, the application of the law, and the seeking of the cross. This was the one thing Luther said you could not do with it, choose it. It was precisely such "chosen" mortification Luther had encountered in the monastery and the only solution he found to the hypocritical spiritual pride it produced was to insist on what he knew to be true, that the subject of mortification, the opus alienum, could never be any one other than God Himself. It certainly could not be man. This was Luther's solution, an opus alienum Dei, which Pietism failed utterly to understand. There is no gradual growth in sanctity, there is only God's daily work of conforming the Christian to the death and resurrection of His Son. In Pietism the psychological development of the individual gives continuity to Justification/Sanctification and death/life. In Luther it is God as the subject of His opus alienum and opus proprium which gives it continuity.⁹

Pietism forsook the theologia crucis of faith hidden in weakness and the new man hidden with Christ in God for the theologia gloriae of an empirical sanctity. It exchanged a faith hidden in weakness for a faith

⁹ Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 6-7, 226, 242-243.

revealed in "experience." It made faith equal Wiedergeburt defined according to a pattern of its own choosing. Bonhoeffer describes the pious as unsatisfied with faith, eager "to see with their own eyes." "Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them." (Matt. 6:1) It is not from other men Christians are to hide their discipleship, but from themselves. "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." (Matt. 6:3)¹⁰ This is the theologia crucis which judges all theologia gloriae of man.

For Luther the man of pride is essentially the man who is secure (sicher) in his own religiousness. For Spener Sicherheit is always the Orthodox Lutheran secure in his reine Lehre, his "buchstäbliche Glaube." Pietism rightly attacked this cheap grace. But as each new movement seems blind to its own fatal weakness, Pietism did not see that it had erected another Sicherheit in its place, the Sicherheit of the wiedergeboren. If Orthodoxy would not tolerate "impure" doctrine, Pietism refused to tolerate the "impious" life.¹¹

the exaggerated esteem for one's own conversion, which one should be able to date by day and hour...(and) the striving for sanctification of life lead to a false 'sanctity,' which believes itself to be finished with sin and compassionately looks down upon 'the world.'¹²

The theologia gloriae in which the Christian possessed the reine Lehre

¹⁰ Bonhoeffer, The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 139-144, 267-268.

¹¹ Randall, p. 406.

¹² von Loewenich, Die Geschichte der Kirche, p. 316.

gave way to a theologia gloriae in which he possessed the Wiedergeburt and its fruits. But the theologia crucis was not heard.

ALBRECHT RITSCHL

(1882-1889)

1822 -

ALBRECHT RITSCHL

Both Lutheran Orthodoxy and Lutheran Pietism failed to grasp Luther's dialectical understanding of the rapprochement between God and man. They ended defending contrary halves of his position. In a sense the history could end there, for these were the two classic positions Lutheranism took. But of course history did not end there. There followed the Aufklärung with its revolutionary impact on human thought. Yet even the Aufklärung held one of these positions. It perpetuated the Pietistic, the "subjective," understanding of the reformation.

At the close of the nineteenth century no theology could compare in influence with that of Albrecht Ritschl. The task he set himself was to reinterpret the reformation over against what he took to be the misinterpretations of Orthodoxy, Pietism, etc. His motto, back to the New Testament by way of the reformation, is well known.¹

In the middle of the nineteenth century, when he began his work, the reigning philosophical idealism was discredited by a reaction in philosophical thought. Its cry was, "back to Kant." This neo-Kantianism interpreted him in accord with a positivism which denied every form of metaphysics and every possibility of knowledge of God. To this movement

¹Mackintosh, H. R., Types Of Modern Theology, London, 1956, pp. 138-139; Kantonen, T. A., The Resurgence Of The Gospel, Philadelphia, 1948, pp. 61-62.

Ritschl belonged.²

Ritschl went back to Kant and thus to the philosophy of the Aufklärung in its "perfected form." One ought not to permit himself to be blinded by Ritschl's extensive discussions of Biblical evidence and the history of dogma to the fact that his chief concern was with Kant's thought interpreted as an "anti-metaphysical moralism." As such his work did not result in overcoming the Aufklärung, but in its fulfillment.³

After Kant, Ritschl's dependence on Schleiermacher was of next importance.⁴ While he was frequently critical of Schleiermacher, and at some points concerned to make clear his departures from him, his basic similarity to Schleiermacher's thought is far more significant than the differences between them. He declared his debt to Schleiermacher particularly in terms of his dependence on: a) his theological method of analyzing relationships within the framework of the subjective life, and his application of this subjective methodology to the interpretation of the gospel,⁵ and b) his conception of vocation as a category for interpreting justifica-

²Barth, Karl, Die protestantische Theologie im 19 Jahrhundert, E. T. From Rousseau To Ritschl, London, 1959, pp. 190-191; Neve, II, pp. 148-149; Kantonen, pp. 61-62; Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 387.

³Barth, From Rousseau To Ritschl, pp. 190-191, 391-392; Professor Mackintosh wrote, "Barth...describes Ritschl's theology as simply going back behind Idealism and Romanticism to the essential tenets of the Aufklärung ...this is much too strong." Page 141, footnote 1. Here however the judgment of Barth must be followed. See also, Orr, James, The Ritschlian Theology And The Evangelical Faith, Third Ed., London, 1905, p. 185;

⁴See here Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 443-444, 466, 594, III, p. 11.

⁵Ibid., I, p. 452.

tion.⁶

No nineteenth century theologian was more eager to have Luther on his side. Here is a strange paradox. For one for whom Luther was one of the great heroes of faith, Ritschl showed a deplorable lack of insight into his thought. He distinguished between the younger and the older Luther, and like Pietism, found the younger more congenial to his position. According to Ritschl, Luther was at his best before the reformation spirit was checked in the mid-1520s. Then it became conservative and reactionary in order to establish and preserve the gains thus far accomplished. As a result, Ritschl considered Lutheran theology, from that time on, including the older Luther and all of the Lutheran Confessional writings, as a development contrary to the reformation within the reformation.⁷

Thus arose Ritschl's famous assertion that the teaching of the reformation had remained within the medieval world of thought, and that the meaning of the reformation was "more concealed than revealed in the works of Luther and Melancthon."⁸ In this context the Ritschlian school wanted not only to continue but also to correct the work of the reformation.⁹

However, the Weimar edition of Luther's works was begun in 1883. A new opportunity was afforded scholars to study Luther. This combined with

⁶ Lehmann, Paul L., "A Critical Comparison Of The Doctrine Of Justification In The Theologies Of A. Ritschl And K. Barth," Unpublished Dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1937, pp. 405-407, 411-414.

⁷ Swing, Albert T., The Theology Of Albrecht Ritschl, New York, 1901, p. 35; Schultz, R. C., Gesetz und Evangelium in der lutherischen Theologie des 19 Jahrhunderts, Berlin, 1958, p. 170.

⁸ Geschichte des Pietismus, I, p. 14; see also p. 41. This point of view is one with that expressed by Harnack in the second volume of his History Of Dogma.

⁹ Garvie, A. E., The Ritschlian Theology, Edinburgh, 1902, p. 131.

the startling discoveries of manuscripts of his lectures on Romans and Hebrews, together with some other material, created a Luther renaissance. The result of the tide of new studies was a revolution against the Ritschlian interpretation of Luther.¹⁰

In summary, Ritschl's theology was a restatement, in the last half of the nineteenth century, of the theology of the Aufklärung, a neo-Kantianism, which took its departure from the Pietistic, the subjective, understanding of Luther.

METAPHYSIK

It is well known that Kant strove against the pretensions of the Aufklärung, particularly as he knew them in the work of C. Wolff. The Ritschlian theology sought to follow in this direction and liked to speak of a "theology without metaphysics," by which was meant a rejection of the speculative deism of the Aufklärung and of mysticism.¹

Ritschl followed Kant in abandoning the traditional arguments for the existence of God.

The thought of God, when by the word is understood
conscious personality, lies beyond the horizon of
metaphysic...²

¹⁰Neve, II, p. 171.

¹Garvie, pp. 5, 31.

²Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 17.

He also followed him in his moral argument for the existence of God.³ However, the significance of Kant's position did not lie in the particular way in which he deduced it. Instead it was his postulating spiritual realities on the basis of the needs of man's moral nature which was epoch-making.⁴

the basis of the distinction between religious and scientific knowledge is not to be sought in its object.

It is to be found in the sphere of the subject, in the difference of attitude of the subject toward the object.⁵

"Theology without metaphysics" was a rallying point for the Ritschlian school.⁶ Ritschl's motivation was undoubtedly to secure a place for faith by these limitations, but by limiting the teachings of the Christian religion to what may be experienced by man he created much reduced versions of the Biblical doctrines. The doctrines of God, of Christ, of sin, etc. were limited to what may be known of them in their phenomenal aspects.⁷

As a result of his adoption of this Kantian position, what older theologians had called the formal principle of theology, the source of its data, Ritschl defined as "value-judgments." He distinguished between a Seinurteil

³McGiffert, A. C., The Rise Of Modern Religious Ideas, New York, 1929, pp. 225-226; Baillie, John, The Sense Of The Presence Of God, Ed. McIntyre, J., New York, 1962, pp. 96-97. The God who cannot be perceived "in abstracto" can be perceived "in concreto" in the moral act. Barth, From Rousseau To Ritschl, pp. 160-161.

⁴McGiffert, The Rise Of Modern Religious Ideas, pp. 132-143.

⁵Moore, E. C., History Of Christian Thought Since Kant, London, 1912, pp. 89-91; see also Orr, pp. 65-68.

⁶Orr, pp. 237-238; Garvie, pp. 56, 70. In speaking of theology without metaphysics Ritschl himself was unclear. He appears to have meant by metaphysics chiefly the ontological speculations of the Hegelians. Brunner, The Mediator, pp. 58-59.

⁷Garvie, pp. 20, 52; Mackintosh, p. 174.

as a statement about the existence of a thing and a Werturteil as a statement of conviction. Not only is this Kantian in form, but the term may also be indirectly traced to Kant.⁸ A Seinurteil states something about the objective nature of things, while a value-judgment makes a statement about the worth of something to the subject. The former makes relatively disinterested statements about objects, while the value-judgment is "in plain English, a personal conviction."⁹

The conception of value-judgments was not intended to deny the objectivity of what is valued. It was Ritschl's way of saying that personal conviction is both the condition and the form of religious knowledge. Value-judgments are judgments about the value of things to the subject, the degree to which they fill some need or want of the self.¹⁰

Against the conception of Werturteil many critical voices were raised. Ritschl answered such criticism in this way,

If what is wanted is to write theology on the plan not merely of a narrative of the great deeds done by God, but of a system representing the salvation He has wrought out, then we must exhibit the operations of God, justification, regeneration...in such a way as shall involve an analysis of the corresponding voluntary activities in which man appropriates the operations of God. This method has

⁸Garvie, pp. 31, 36, 179.

⁹McGiffert, The Rise Of Modern Religious Ideas, pp. 161-162; Mackintosh, p. 153; Baillie, The Sense Of The Presence Of God, pp. 105-106.

¹⁰Mackintosh, p. 154; Garvie, p. 185; Orr, pp. 65-68.

been already adopted by Schleiermacher. Now those who are strangers to the work of theology urge against this method, that what they are concerned about is the objective bearing of theological doctrines and not the interpretation of them as reflected in the subject, and that this method renders the whole matter uncertain. Such a view is at variance with the right theory of knowledge; for in knowledge we observe and explain even the objects of sense-perception, not as they are in themselves, but as we perceive them. If what is intended in Dogmatics is merely to describe objectively Divine operations that means the abandonment of the attempt to understand their practical bearing. For apart from voluntary activity, through which we receive and utilize for our own blessedness the operations of God, we have no means of understanding objective dogmas as religious truths.¹¹

There is no validity in representing the activity of God as opposite to, or at the expense of, the activity of man. God's work can only be understood in terms of man's responses to His work. Therefore theology cannot be written from the standpoint of God, but is only "intelligible" when written from the standpoint of the subjective functions of man.¹²

¹¹Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 34-35; see also 49-50, 220.
¹²Lehmann, pp. 154, 410-413, 475-476.

Ritschl's system brings God into dependence on, even subordination to, His creature. According to Ritschl man values himself over against nature. He sees himself as the crown of its development; he dominates it; it is his instrument. Now God is not to be regarded as One infinitely superior to man, upon whom man is dependent and from whom man derives whatever value he possesses, but as an idea which guarantees man's superior worth over nature. This God supports man's confidence in himself. He is the counterpart of man's autonomy, not his sense of dependence. One is prompted to ask whether such a God has anything in common with the God of the Scripture and of the Christian Faith.¹³

To conclude this section of our study it is necessary to see how Ritschl related this aspect of his theology to Pietism or mysticism as he frequently referred to it. There is the closest connection between Ritschl's program of excluding metaphysics from theology and his antagonism to Pietism.¹⁴

His epistemology precluded any personal relationship between the believer and God. He wrote, mysticism is possible only by a "misunderstanding of the correct theory of knowledge."¹⁵ He rejected the unio mystica altogether. Many critics have felt he thereby rejected the possibility of any personal communion with God.¹⁶

He was in Barth's phrase, "the ferocious opponent of Pietism." He accused the Pietists of returning to medieval monasticism, and, instead of

¹³Niebuhr, H. Richard, The Meaning Of Revelation, New York, 1946, pp. 29-31; Garvie, p. 259.

¹⁴See here Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 21; and his Theologie und Metaphysik, pp. 27-28, 52-53, quoted in Garvie, pp. 134, 137.

¹⁵Theologie und Metaphysik, p. 51, quoted in Swing, pp. 145-150.

¹⁶Garvie, p. 138; Moore, pp. 98-99.

holding only to the effects of God which can be experienced, of desiring to experience God Himself.¹⁷ Pietism was Ritschl's "bete noire."¹⁸ He was severely critical of all it stood for. Still, like Kant and Schleiermacher before him, his theology was built in direct continuity with the subjective Pietistic understanding of Christianity. All his anti-Pietistic polemics notwithstanding, he had far more in common with Pietism than he would have cared to admit. Nineteenth century theology arose not out of the thought of the reformation but out of the soil of Pietism and this link cannot be ignored.¹⁹

THE WRATH OF GOD

It is apparent that to look for a doctrine of mortification and the opus alienum Dei in Ritschl's theology in the traditional sense would be futile. However, what Ritschl has to say about the wrath of God answers most relevantly to the theme of this study.

Of Luther he wrote,

In his bold manner of statement he so decisively brings the love into prominence over the wrath, that in occasional expressions he weakens the wrath of God into an unreal reflex of the sinner's bad conscience.¹ His

¹⁷Barth, From Rousseau To Ritschl, p. 394.

¹⁸Mackintosh, pp. 140, 145.

¹⁹Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 103; Prenter, Spiritus Creator, pp. 69-70.

¹Which is not Luther's view at all, but reflects Ritschl's own position.

true opinion however is essentially that God's love as the ultimate motive of the sinner's redemption is the superior determination of His will, while penal justice or wrath, regarded as 'not the proper' work of God, is considered as the subordinate motive of His action in carrying out the work of redemption. This ranking of the ideas is also implied when Luther ...describes wrath as a modification of love. At the same time, it is only in occasional moments of logical consistency that Luther...in the expressions of wrath would have us discern proofs of love. On the whole, he makes love and wrath in God, notwithstanding his subordination of the latter to the former, to appear as co-ordinate and therefore as opposed and even contradictory forces, for the harmonizing of which in God Himself, endurance of punishment by the Mediator is necessary.²

Further along the same page, Ritschl showed his discomfort with this view of Luther's by crediting Luther with an idea which was certainly Ritschl's own. This idea is that the grace of God is His justice, that is, that the love and wrath of God are not "co-ordinate" or "contradictory forces" but actually the same thing.³ Why must Ritschl take this point of view?

In answer he wrote:

²Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 201-202.

³Ibid.

a plain contradiction is involved in the way in which Luther derives reconciliation from the love of God, but at the same time derives from the wrath of God the satisfaction which Christ has to work out through the vicarious endurance of punishment. For it is impossible to conceive sinners, at the same time and in the same respect, as objects both of God's love and God's wrath.⁴

Protestant Orthodoxy...instead of repudiating altogether the ideas which follow from the idea of Divine retribution...endeavors to preserve them in force alongside of the inferences from Divine grace. This is accomplished by means of a compromise, the artificiality and pretended profundity of which are no guarantee of its truth.⁵

We are brought...to the conclusion...that the conception of God which dominates the argument is not thought as a unity.⁶

The theologians of the Reformation taught "no inconsistencies so plain and open as these."⁷ Thus Ritschl repudiated the tension between the wrath and love of God by declaring that this was a rational contradiction in the nature of God and therefore impossible. This consideration should not be ignored, but there is a deeper one. What is most profoundly at stake here was Ritschl's

⁴Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 263-265.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., pp.266-267.

⁷Ibid., pp. 263-267.

continuity with the Aufklärung which could find no place for the wrath of God because it could find nothing for Him to be wrathful about.

Ritschl took another line of argument in contending that wrath and love could not stand side by side in the Divine nature.

all our reflections about God's wrath and compassion, His long-suffering and patience, His severity and sympathy, are based upon a comparison of our individual position with God's, under the form of time. However indispensable these judgments may be in the texture of our religious experience, still they stand in no relation whatever to the theological conception of the whole from the viewpoint of eternity (sub specie aeternitatis).⁸

Actually when this is understood, the idea of the "pain suffered by God's love" because of the sin of man can be eliminated, as can the need for any mediation between the wrath and love of God in explaining the reconciliation of sinners to Him. For "no validity can be assigned to the idea of the wrath of God."⁹

The authority of Holy Scripture gives us no right to relate the wrath of God to sinners as such...If we assume that God foresees their final inclusion in His Kingdom, as theologians we have no alternative but to trace their redemption back to His love in an unbroken line, even though these very redeemed ones may, as their ideas take a temporal form, have the impression of a

⁸ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 322-323.

⁹ Ibid.

change from Divine wrath to Divine mercy.¹⁰

The notion that there is a "temporal change in God's attitude" must be surrendered, when we look at the matter, not from the side of man imprisoned in temporality, but from the side of God, sub specie aeternitatis.

It is of the greatest importance for the systematic procedure of theology that this difference, between our individual religious thinking and the form of theological cognition sub specie aeternitatis, should never be forgotten. Our self-consciousness is bound up with time, and it is never given us to survey the whole of the Divine order within which we move as parts, so that we simply cannot but regard and judge our relation to God under the form of time; and thus we reproduce, in the idea that God's relations to us change, the alterations of our own experience.¹¹

However, it was a profound insight Luther had in holding the wrath and love of God side by side and in speaking of their expression in the opus alienum and opus proprium Dei. When the wrath of God is rejected, as it was by the Aufklärung and the nineteenth century, the radical opposition of God to evil is lost.¹²

Ritschl believed the Scriptural evidence supported him in his Aufklärung position on this issue.

¹⁰Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 323-325.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 325-326.

¹²Aulen, The Faith Of The Christian Church, pp. 139-140.

There is no other conception of equal worth beside this (Divine Fatherhood) which need be taken into account.

This is especially true of the conception of the Divine holiness, which, in its Old Testament sense, is for various reasons not valid in Christianity, while its use in the New Testament is obscure.¹³

Barth summarizes Ritschl's exegetical work on the conception of the wrath of God¹⁴ in this way: the wrath of God implies a negation of His love and therefore must be seen as a conception already disappearing in the Old Testament and in New Testament thought to be understood only exchatologically.¹⁵ All ideas of Divine punishment and wrath must be rejected as inconsistent with the love of God. There is no God who judges sinners. The wrath of God is a "medieval superstition." But it is precisely the co-existence of wrath and love in God which is one of the distinctive marks of the Christian conception of God distinguishing it from every other conception of God.¹⁶

In addition to denying that wrath and love belonged together to the nature of God, Ritschl repudiated the conception of God as "Lawgiver and Judge" held by Protestant Orthodoxy. God was not to be conceived of as "Lawgiver and Judge" but only as the "Dispenser of grace and love to men."¹⁷

¹³ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 273-274. Ritschl referred here to his Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung, Band II, pp. 89, 101.

¹⁴ To be found chiefly in Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung, Band II, Zweites Capitel, pp. 89-156. These ideas were already developed in De Ira Dei (1859)

¹⁵ Barth, From Rousseau To Ritschl, p. 396.

¹⁶ Brunner, The Mediator, pp. 137-138, 58-59; Pinomaa, Lennart, Voittavausko, E.T. Faith Victorious by Kukkonen, W.J., Philadelphia, 1963, p. 18.

¹⁷ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 86-88.

the attitude of God in the act of justification cannot be conceived as that of Judge. The justification of sinners by God, when explained by the analogy of the bestowal of pardon by the head of State, can just as little be deduced from the attribute of Lawgiver. It could rather be shown that the bestowal of pardon is in direct contradiction to the attribute of Lawgiver.¹⁸

Here Ritschl accused the Orthodox theologians of conceiving of God as an earthly sovereign, a chief-of-state, whose function is to give and administer the law.¹⁹ However, the conception of God "transcends the analogy of State processes." Rather than as Lawgiver and Judge, God ought to be understood as the "Founder and Ruler of His Kingdom."²⁰ The Founder of the Kingdom of God can best be understood simply as Father.

The title of Judge as applied to God has therefore for Christians no real place alongside of, or over, the relation in which He stands to them as Father. It is only, therefore, when the love of God, regarded as Father, is conceived as the will which works toward the destined end, that the real equivalence of forgiveness and justification, which is represented in the

¹⁸ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 90.

¹⁹ Schultz, p. 173.

²⁰ Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 92. A parallel to Kant may be seen here who contended that God as Judge could not know mercy. "A good (or kind) Judge in one and the same person is a contradiction." Religion Within The Limits Of Reason Alone, cited in Schultz, p. 29.

religious conception of things, can be made good. If however God be preconceived as Judge in the forensic sense, the two ideas come into direct antagonism with one another, as was indeed explicitly maintained by the leading representatives of the older theology.²¹

Ritschl found the Orthodox doctrine of God "altogether impracticable,"²² and wanted to replace what he believed Orthodoxy had made a legal relationship with a relationship based on love from the heavenly Father.²³

The same point of view is apparent when Ritschl turns to the subject of rewards and punishments. He accused Orthodox theology of conceiving of the world order as one of recompensing human actions by rewards and punishments, "on the analogy of the State or civil society."²⁴

Ritschl desired to divest the Divine nature of everything judicial and punitive. More specifically, he taught that the Scripture passages dealing with retributive justice are in the case of the Old Testament of post-exilic date and in the case of the New Testament of a Pharisaic spirit, foreign to the general teaching of the Bible. Above all the idea of the world governed by reward and punishment was declared entirely alien to the spirit of Christianity.²⁵

²¹ Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 94.

²² Ibid., p. 250.

²³ Schultz, p. 173.

²⁴ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 49-51. Kant too directed his criticism against the conception of rewards and punishments as destructive of true morality. McGiffert, The Rise Of Modern Religious Ideas, pp. 225-226.

²⁵ Justification And Reconciliation, III, 362; Ritschl, Albrecht, Unterricht in der christlichen Religion, E.T. Instruction In The Christian Religion, by Swing, A.M., New York, 1901, pp. 220-221. Orr, pp. 110, 138-139, 148-149; Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 688.

the asserted necessity of a penal satisfaction to God as a condition of the exercise of His grace has no foundation in the Biblical conception of God; on the contrary, it is an intellectual inference from the principle of Hellenic religion that the gods practice a twofold retribution, a principle further supplemented by the assumption that the original adjustment of the relation between God and man is to be interpreted in terms of a legal ordinance.²⁶

the God who is conceived under this attribute is an idol...²⁷

His own view comes to the fore in his praise of the Aufklärung²⁸ for the "great advance" of setting aside all ideas of punishment in reconciliation and of speaking only of the removal of guilt and the consciousness of guilt. This is the background for his own view that it is the "subjective consciousness of guilt" which makes an evil a punishment.²⁹ What he meant was that since God is never a God of wrath, but only a loving Father, He is a God who never punishes. If a human subject feels punished, it is an inference the subject makes because of his consciousness of guilt and his need for punishment as his desert, but it says nothing about the activity of God.

²⁶ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 477-478.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 261.

²⁸ Specifically Tiefertunk, Censur des christlichen protestantischen Lehrbegriffs, 1791-1793.

²⁹ Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 424, 362; see also III, pp. 49-51.

We have had occasion to note that it was Pietism in protestantism that first hurried over the second use of the law and the opus alienum Dei to get as quickly as possible to the gospel and the opus proprium Dei. On this point Pietism was one of the first signs of the modern age. The theocentric world-view of the Scripture was swept aside by the new age of autonomous man. For such an age the God of law and judgment no longer reigned.³⁰

As the ideas of the new age about the worth and dignity of man spread, the traditional conceptions of God changed as well. The God of love and wrath whom the reformation knew became a stranger. The Aufklärung minimized human sinfulness and the righteousness and justice of God became less important. It was God's love and goodness that were emphasized. The new age revolted once and for all against the reformation theology which made God everything and man nothing.³¹

Ritschl applauded these changes.

in comparison with the Middle Ages, it is an important result of Christian culture that Fatherly Goodness is recognized as the natural representation of God...It is in comparing it with the Middle Ages that one recognized the specific superiority of the Illumination period as a whole. For it is the acknowledged merit of the Illumination to have finally cleared away the manifold traces of the continued influence of the Middle Ages.³²

The Aufklärung had finally rid the conception of God of all traces of The

³⁰Hirsch, II, pp. 142-143.

³¹McGiffert, The Rise Of Modern Religious Ideas, pp. 242-251.

³²Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 374.

"juridical justice" which, as the heritage of the middle ages, had lingered on in reformation thought.³³

It was in this way Ritschl came to one of the major themes of his theology, "the Fatherhood of God." We have already noted Ritschl taught that the true analogy for the Kingdom of God lay not in the national State, where law and justice reigned, but in the family. Therefore the relationships within the Kingdom of God, including justification and reconciliation, must be understood on the pattern of those between a father and the members of his family.³⁴ In addition, God was no longer to be defined as righteousness or as power, but only as love. The statement, "God is love" contained the whole of the doctrine of God.³⁵

As a result of this progression of thought Ritschl drew the final conclusion. If God is not a God of wrath and love, but a God of love only, then no movement from wrath to love is possible for Him. Whatever movement there is must take place in man.

If now...Christ is the bearer of God's love and grace, then it was needful at the same time to overcome in sinners the impression of the wrath of God which stood as an obstacle in the way of recognition of eternal grace. For God's mercy and justice are not opposed to one another in God Himself, but only in the consciousness of the sinner.³⁶

³³Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 374.

³⁴Ibid., III, pp. 95, 996, 98, 272-273.

³⁵Orr, p. 112; Schultz, p. 172.

³⁶Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 528. Written of Stier, Andeutungen für gläubiges Schrift verständniss and Beiträge zur biblischen Theologie, but here indicating Ritschl's own position as well.

God does not change, all that man must do is recognize that fact along with its companion, that the changeless God is love. The "change" is purely subjective. The "consciousness of guilt" which the sinner has and the "mistrust towards God" which accompanies it need only be exchanged for a new relationship with God based on the knowledge that He is a God of love for whom wrath does not exist.³⁷

Whatever "change" must take place is purely subjective. There is nothing objective about it, because it does not concern the two parties, God and man, but only the one. The will of God is constant and unchanging. There can be no variation in His dealings with men. His will is an eternal will to save mankind in His Kingdom. God's relationship to man is a relationship of love and of love only. When men are conscious of a change in their relationship to God, it is because for the first time they become conscious of His love which has existed all along.³⁸

God is love. His disposition has not been changed by man's sin. However where man in his sin has failed to trust God he has constructed a false picture of His wrath in his mind. As a result he feared to draw near to God. When man understands that God is love, in Christ, this false idea is removed and man knows God as the Father He has always been.³⁹

One final step in the argument remains to be noted. From all that has gone before one might well conclude that the conception of the wrath of God has no place in Ritschl's theology at all. However Ritschl did retain the

³⁷Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 100, 108.

³⁸Garvie, pp. 307-308, 376-377; Orr, p. 172.

³⁹Neve, II, pp. 150-151; Schultz, p. 174.

concept and find a place for it. We have already noted he believed that the Old Testament conception of Divine wrath had no application to today.

The wrath of God is used by the writers of the New Testament only in the eschatological application, which the prophets connected with the picturing of the final judgment.⁴⁰

This is the chief change which the conception undergoes in the New Testament that it is only applied eschatologically and is no longer used in the judgment of present events.⁴¹

For the apostles, the wrath of God

indicates the final destruction of those, determined upon by a previous purpose of will, who decide against the order of salvation and thus against God's moral order of the world.⁴²

The wrath of God has nothing to do with justification, therefore the conception of Protestant Orthodoxy which saw the vicarious satisfaction of Christ as necessary is erroneous and unscriptural. According to Ritschl's understanding, the only meaning which the conception of the wrath of God possesses is an eschatological one. It will meet only such men as reject the grace God offers continually and obstinately and who persistently oppose themselves to His purpose in realizing His kingdom.⁴³

⁴⁰Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung, II, p. 140.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 153.

⁴²Ibid., p. 154.

⁴³Schultz, p. 174; Garvie, pp. 261, 308.

Basically Ritschl felt that to speak of the wrath of God created a division in God between His love and His wrath. Then it becomes necessary for God by His love to find a way out of the conflict between these opposites in His own nature. In the Protestant Orthodox view, the atonement wrought by Christ enables the wrath of God to be satisfied.⁴⁴ However when the inner tension between the wrath and the love of God is removed, both the Divine justice and the Divine love lose their full stature. When the conception of the Divine justice and wrath is suppressed, the conception of God is humanized and the sovereign majesty of God and His radical opposition to evil are obscured. The conception of sin is weakened or lost.

This was really to set the Biblical conception of God into a monistic and evolutionary world-view deriving from the idealistic philosophy. But when this is done not only is the conception of the wrath of God lost to theology, but the conception of the love of God is robbed of its real profundity. It is impossible, in the Ritschlian theology, to see the love of God engaged in a bitter struggle with sin and evil and finally coming to the cross.⁴⁵ Where the conception of the wrath of God is repudiated, and the need for the wrath of God, even the conception of the love of God is robbed of its deepest meaning.⁴⁶

When the question of the atonement is raised, following Ritschl's theological position, there is no place for a removal of an alienation between

⁴⁴Tillich, Systematic Theology, II, pp. 76-77.

⁴⁵Aulen, The Faith Of The Christian Church, pp. 95, 103-105, 128-129.

⁴⁶Professor Mackintosh has pointed out that W. Herrmann, who belonged to the Ritschlian school, felt his rejection of the wrath of God was a great sin against the Christian soul. P. 159

God and man. No such alienation exists, for there is no Divine hostility to sin. However, only where God is known as really angry because He takes sin seriously does the atonement have any real meaning. The conception of God's holiness and love, of His wrath and mercy, cannot be destroyed without also destroying the Biblical conception of God and the whole meaning of the atonement.⁴⁷

In its place Ritschl set man's giving up his mistrust of God which had been based on a misunderstanding of God's character. God feels nothing but love for men, even for those who resist Him. It is therefore an error to say that He punishes anyone and equally an error for man to have any sense of guilt at all.⁴⁸ Man's guilt is due to ignorance. The atonement which must take place is that man's ignorance which produces his sense of guilt and his conception of the wrath of God must be changed to the knowledge that God is love alone.

In the history of theology those who have had the most to say about the wrath of God have recognized that this doctrine stands like a "sentinel" against all such anthropocentric interpretations of religion as Ritschl's. Every tendency to make God the servant of man, His activity contingent on the states of human subjectivity, is doomed by the conception of the holiness and wrath of God. Ritschl's anthropocentric theology is judged by the Biblical conception of God which declares that man is absolutely dependent on God, not God on man; that man is in His power, not He in man's; and that

⁴⁷Aulen, Christus Victor, pp. 137-138; Brunner, The Mediator, pp. 518-519.

⁴⁸Aulen, Ibid.; Brunner, Ibid., pp. 466-467. This despite the fact that Ritschl does not draw this conclusion as clearly as he might.

the divine and the human are not to be seen as shading off into one another, but as clearly distinct.⁴⁹

SIN

Over against the reformation teaching of human depravity, the Aufklärung had taken a much more optimistic view of man emphasizing his nobility and worth. This was much more in tune with the spirit of the times which gave so large a place in its thinking to the autonomy of man. From the standpoint of this more "modern" view, Ritschl attacked the reformation understanding of original sin.

Augustine's doctrine of original sin found favor with Luther more as a ground for the negation of human merit before God, and as an argument against the freedom of the will...(however) to assert the doctrine of original sin in order to refute the validity of merit before God is just as appropriate as it would be to use a boulder to kill a gnat.¹

He believed that this Augustinian doctrine of original sin was not confirmed by any New Testament writer,² and that Luther erred in adopting a doctrine which could not be confirmed in human experience as the doctrine of

⁴⁹Aulen, The Faith Of The Christian Church, pp. 123-124.

¹Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 339-340.

²Instruction In The Christian Religion, p. 203.

actual sins could be.³ Protestant Orthodoxy simply followed in the error of the reformation.

the old Protestant doctrine of original sin...though put forward with a thoroughly practical design, had never been able to produce a corresponding practical consciousness; since the attribute of guilt in original sin was never adequately proved, and indeed could not be proved.⁴

Guilt cannot be derived from a man's "natural origin," but only from the "empirical determination of the will."⁵ Here Schleiermacher was right, Ritschl contended, because he denied that anyone ought to have guilt on the basis of original sin, apart from actual sins.⁶ A "universal necessity" of sinning cannot be derived from the natural endowment of man. The "fact" of universal sin which experience confirms derives from the temptations to self-seeking which arise from the sins of society.⁷ The conception of original sin simply can no longer be maintained.⁸

Ritschl rejected the doctrine of original sin for two fundamental reasons: a) because it cannot be verified in experience, and b) because it interfered with the optimistic view he held of man and human progress. In the first instance he contended sin could only be understood as an individual phenomenon, each man being influenced by the evils of collective life.

³Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 328.

⁴Ibid., I, p. 388.

⁵Ibid., III, p. 337.

⁶Ibid., I, p. 457; see also III, p. 327.

⁷Instruction In The Christian Religion, pp. 204-205.

⁸Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 341-342.

In the second instance, his heritage from the Aufklärung was optimistic about man and his "infinite perfectibility." Kant's emphasis on the autonomy of man, on his inherent moral strength in overcoming evil, entered powerfully into his own theology. There was nothing this anthropocentrism disliked so much as the doctrine of original sin.⁹ In siding with the Aufklärung Ritschl believed he was defending this very individual liberty and individual responsibility.¹⁰

In place of the doctrine of original sin, Ritschl set a conception borrowed from Schleiermacher which he called the Kingdom of Sin.¹¹

The notion of original sin...which exists in every individual by a natural necessity...does not secure to us the complete Christian conception and estimate of actual sin...This notion, therefore...is useless for the purpose of making the idea of the Kingdom of Sin more distinct or intelligible. The Kingdom of Sin, however, is a substitute for the hypothesis of original sin which gives due prominence to everything that the notion of original sin was rightly enough meant to embrace. For Luther's view that the doctrine of original sin is revealed in Scripture, is based upon an

⁹Mackintosh, pp. 16, 159-160, 177; Brunner, The Mediator, pp. 128-129.

¹⁰Garvie, p. 306; Orr, p. 145.

¹¹He expressed his appreciation to Schleiermacher, but criticized him for inserting this teaching in his theology under the heading of Original Sin, "to which it bears very little resemblance." Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 399.

inaccurate exegesis of particular expressions.¹²

The Kingdom of Sin is the "immoral human world" which is maintained and re-enforced in every new generation.¹³ The term, "Kingdom," is used for what is involved is not only the sin of the individual, no one sins in isolation, but the collective influence of individual sinners one on the other. It is a kingdom of mutual influence, the sum of all the temptations to and occasions for sin. Christian theology, Ritschl thought, had given far too much attention to the individual sinner as though he did in fact live in isolation from his fellows, rather than recognizing that every individual both conditions, and is conditioned by, the common sinfulness of the society to which he belongs.¹⁴

It is true that Ritschl, following Kant faithfully, believed sin to be the responsible act of the individual. There was no question about this. What he rejected was, in his own phrase, a "universal necessity" of sinning as the inheritance of humanity. In the place of the latter, he set his idea of the individual never living in isolation but always influencing and being influenced by his environment. With this conception of the Kingdom of Sin, Ritschl felt he had captured the real content of the doctrine of original sin in a more satisfactory way.

In reality, however, the Kingdom of Sin is a conception very remote from that of original sin. It may be explained entirely, in what we would call today, psychological and sociological terms. It says nothing about

¹²Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 344.

¹³Instruction In The Christian Religion, p. 206.

¹⁴Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 338; Garvie, pp. 303-304; Brunner, The Mediator, pp. 135-136.

the "universal necessity" of sinning in man himself, whether or not he is tempted by his environment. As a consistent Kantian, Ritschl contended this temptation could and ought to be resisted and overcome. In doing so Ritschl repudiated the heart of the doctrine of original sin, its totality.¹⁵

He, therefore, could not and did not understand sin as something which separates man from God.

God loves sinners in view of their ideal destiny, to realize which He chooses them. Why sin should make this relationship unthinkable it is impossible to see.¹⁶

Autonomous man does not need to be reconciled and restored to God, which is the heart of the Biblical view, but he needs only to be permitted to progress. Where no opposition exists between God and man, there is no need for reconciliation. The idea of sin was not permitted to intrude on the optimistic Aufklärung idea of progress. When this view of history is held, there is no place for a serious doctrine of sin.¹⁷

In fact, in the next step in his argument, Ritschl contended sin was a subjective judgment, a "value-notion." He commended Schleiermacher for pointing this out.¹⁸ Evil is real enough, but instead of regarding himself as depraved or corrupt, let man awaken to what he really is, a "becoming" child of God.¹⁹

In so far as men, regarded as sinners both in their

¹⁵ Brunner, Der Mensch im Widerspruch, E. T. Man In Revolt, by Wyon, O., Philadelphia, 1947, pp. 124-125.

¹⁶ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 320-323.

¹⁷ Brunner, The Mediator, pp. 134-138.

¹⁸ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 334, 384, I, p. 452.

¹⁹ McGiffert, The Rise Of Modern Religious Ideas, p. 206.

individual capacity and as a whole are objects of the redemption and reconciliation made possible by the love of God, sin is estimated by God, not as the final purpose of opposition to the known will of God, but as ignorance.²⁰

Given Ritschl's presuppositions, sin could not be anything else than ignorance. It does not indicate a state of disharmony between God and man. It is essentially a wrong attitude. This agrees with his doctrine of justification as the removal of an error on the part of man, that God is wrathful because of sin.²¹

JUSTIFICATION

From what has gone before, it becomes clear that the doctrine of justification is a crucial point from which to regard the Ritschlian theology. In his historical volume of the Justification And Reconciliation trilogy, Ritschl clearly indicated his preference for the Abelardian view of the atonement. He stated that the view of Abelard excelled that of Anselm, elevated "the problem into a higher sphere than that of law," and bore the Pauline stamp. His preference for this more subjective interpretation of the atonement is clear.

²⁰Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 384.

²¹Brunner, The Mediator, pp. 135-137; Barth, From Rousseau To Ritschl, p. 395.

the act of Christ...must also exercise an influence on the side of man, apart from which the satisfaction avails him nothing. This is accomplished in that the suffering of Christ affords to men an example how, under all the ills that befall them, they should adhere to that righteous conduct which they owe to God; in particular, how they should give back to God their own life when occasion demands it.¹

In his historical analysis, Ritschl criticized Protestant Orthodoxy for assigning a value to the view of Anselm which "has never been given it in any previous age."² He credited Töllner of the Aufklärung for resuscitating the view of Abelard and declared his position a distinct advance upon Protestant Orthodoxy.³ In more recent times, it was Schleiermacher who was its champion.⁴

It was the Aufklärung which had led the assault on the view of Anselm, and, while the nineteenth century did not simply reproduce Aufklärung theology, but attempted to deepen it, in reality it was in closer continuity with the Aufklärung than it believed. There was the same anthropocentric viewpoint underlying both. A line runs back from Ritschl and Schleiermacher,

¹Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 24, 28-29.

²Ibid., I, pp. 512, 40; Brunner, The Mediator, pp. 439-440; Offenbarung und Vernunft, E. T. Revelation And Reason, by Wyon, O., Philadelphia, 1946, p. 107.

³Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 355; III, p. 473. He praised the Kantian, Tieftrunk, for the same reason. Ibid., I, p. 422.

⁴Chapter IX bears the title: "The Revival Of Abelard's Type Of Doctrine By Schleiermacher And His Followers," Ibid., I, p. 440; see also pp. 243, 483.

through the Socinians, to Abelard.⁵

The main feature of this view was that Christ was understood chiefly as an example, as an ideal, which influences men and which they seek to attain. Here it was not the activity of God which was underscored, but the changes which men effect in themselves under the influence of Christ.⁶

Given this view of the matter, it is not at all surprising that Ritschl was uncomfortable with Luther's position on justification. His criticism took the following form.

When Luther at once places justification in a position of central importance...he means by justification through faith in Christ a subjective experience of the believer...⁷

The meaning of the religious experience of justification for Luther was "the consolation of pious consciences, the quieting of souls anxious about their salvation."⁸

We ought never to allow ourselves to forget that there were altogether special circumstances which led Luther so unweariedly to proclaim the comfort of troubled consciences in the good news of justification through Christ. It arose from the circumstance that Luther had pursued so long and so passionately the opposite course of seeking to make himself just with God through the

⁵Aulen, Christus Victor, pp. 135-136; Brunner, The Mediator, p. 438.

⁶Aulen, Ibid., pp. 150-151.

⁷Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 121.

⁸Ibid., p. 122; see also p. 135.

merit of his ascetic works. From his recollection of the energy with which he had sought to carry out this error of his monkish life, Luther derived a great part of that persistency, which he showed in laying so frequent and urgent stress on the consolation of the gospel and the method of its appropriation.⁹

Those who avoided the "error" of Luther's struggle of conscience, arising from a false view to which his "monkish profession," his "nominalistic education," and his "hypocondriac malady" all contributed, could avoid the error of his doctrine of justification.¹⁰ Ritschl contended Luther did not hold to a "juristic" view of justification¹¹ and referred to his return to what Gustaf Aulen calls the "classical view" of the atonement emphasizing Christ's victory over the tyrants: sin, law, devil, death, hell.¹² Taking the Lutheran doctrine as a whole, Ritschl expressed his preference for Osiander's view of justification in its place.¹³

However it was Kant whom Ritschl credited with giving the doctrine of justification its proper stamp. Kant had divided religions into those a) which seek "favor," and b) the "moralistic," concerned with living a good life. He rejected those of the first kind altogether and also all forms of the second kind which emphasized the initiative and activity of God in making new men of old. The proper religion was that which asked what man could do

⁹Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 163.

¹⁰Ibid., see also p. 171.

¹¹By which Ritschl meant Anselm's view.

¹²Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 201-202

¹³Ibid., pp. 218, 220

for his own salvation.¹⁴

Kant also changes the thought of the Divine justification of man...into the thought that this same man, in his self-reliance based upon his freedom, justifies himself...¹⁵

Kant emphasized the "active ethical subject in atomistic independence" and so found the vicarious atonement of a mediator between God and man wholly unnecessary.¹⁶ He insisted no reasonable man could believe he was freed from his guilt by faith in the satisfaction rendered by Christ. It was a dangerous religious delusion to think so.¹⁷ Justification was "a change of subjective circumstances."¹⁸ Faith was the result of the "observance of duty" and religion was "an appendix of morality."¹⁹

What is really meant is only a symbolical transference to Christ of what, properly speaking, man himself does.²⁰

This autonomous change of heart is what is decisive and no "expiations" are necessary. The vicarious act of the Son of God must be taken up into the subject to be of any value whatever to him. The only change which takes place is man's change of heart, effected by the employment of his own powers.²¹ Thus Kant has nothing to say of a positive sort about the mediatorship of

¹⁴Schultz, p. 28.

¹⁵Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 410, 404-405; see also p. 387.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 411.

¹⁷Schultz, p. 29.

¹⁸Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 411.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 421, 434.

²⁰Ibid., p. 438.

²¹Barth, From Rousseau To Ritschl, pp. 182-183, 186-187.

Christ. The man who takes charge of his own moral life needs no mediator.²²

Ritschl declared his indebtedness to Schleiermacher for the insight that justification presupposes a change in man upon which it is based.²³ Here Ritschl and Schleiermacher showed themselves closer to Kant and to Pietism than to the thought of the reformation.²⁴

Turning to Ritschl's statement of his own position, one begins with the conception of guilt. Justification is the removal of guilt and the consciousness of guilt. When the consciousness of guilt is removed, so is man's contradiction to God and his mistrust of God.²⁵ Justification is not strictly annulling guilt, or lifting a judicial judgment on man's sinfulness, but it is the removal of the consciousness of guilt itself. The sinner is restored to God, despite his sins. He overcomes his feeling of pain at guilt, trusts God he is pardoned, and there follows a changed estimate of himself.²⁶

Since there is no wrath of God to be propitiated and justification is the removal of man's consciousness of guilt, the conception of the vicarious atonement of Christ is meaningless. No "special mediation" is necessary to explain the reconciliation of sinners with God.²⁷

The view that Christ, by the vicarious endurance of the punishment deserved by sinful man, propitiated

²² Mackintosh, p. 24, "a too close reliance on the Kantian ethic has done as much as anything to hide from many a Nineteenth Century theologian the real meaning and glory of the gospel."

²³ Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 487-488, 504; see also Aulen, Christus Victor, pp. 136-137; Brunner, The Mediator, p. 438.

²⁴ Brunner, The Divine Imperative, pp. 102-103.

²⁵ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 79-80, 85.

²⁶ Orr, pp. 104-105, 146-147, 156-157; Lehmann, pp. 166-168, 175.

²⁷ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 322-323.

the justice or wrath of God, and thus made possible the grace of God, is not founded on any clear and distinct passage in the New Testament. It rests rather on a presupposition of natural theology, clearly of Pharasaic and Hellenic origin.²⁸

There is no basis for this doctrine in Scripture. It was constructed by Luther and the theologians of Protestant Orthodoxy on the antithesis between the wrath and the love of God, His righteousness and His grace.²⁹ Therefore the language of sacrifice and vicarious satisfaction ought to be replaced by the conception of adoption which accords better with God's nature as loving Father.³⁰

What was denied here was the Biblical understanding of the fact that God actually acts and that a whole new situation is created by His action. Instead justification was understood solely as a subjective event.³¹

Here the Biblical teaching that the atonement of Christ has altered the entire relationship between God and man is lacking. Put in its place is a conception of justification which equates it with the removal of the consciousness of guilt and mistrust of God. No such atonement is necessary as Protestant theology had traditionally taught, but only a fuller revelation of God's fatherly love and forgiving grace.³² Thus one is brought round to the now familiar pattern of the Ritschlian theology.

²⁸Instruction In The Christian Religion, footnote 3, pp. 220-221; for a parallel statement see Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 474.

²⁹Schultz, p. 175. See the discussion of the wrath of God above.

³⁰Orr, pp. 152, 157-158.

³¹Brunner, The Mediator, p. 439.

³²Orr, pp. 265-267, 149-150, 154.

Justification is an altogether subjective event.

Ritschl's conception of God made impossible any variation in God's relationship to men. It was static and unchanging. God's love is an eternal will to save mankind. Sinners therefore are always the objects of His love. When men are conscious of a change in their relationship to God, it is their subjective understanding of this relationship which has changed.³³

Nor was God's relationship to man changed by man's sin. He has always been ready to forgive man. However, man constructed a false picture of God whose wrath he feared. In his fear man no longer risked approaching God. But the separation from God was effected by man himself. His consciousness of guilt was that separation. Thus God revealed Himself as love in Christ so that men might know Him as He really is.³⁴

Justification does not mean the removal of the power of sin dominating man; this man can only accomplish for himself.³⁵ The forgiveness of sins means God overlooks the disharmony between Himself and man. The disharmony itself arises because man does not know God as love. It is removed when man understands that God is love. The wrong idea of God as wrathful is removed and the right idea set in its place. When man has replaced the wrong idea, with the right idea, he is "reconciled." Here justification is a purely subjective process.³⁶

We noted earlier that one of the basic presuppositions of Ritschl's theology was that the acts of God can only be known by men as they are facts of their religious experience. In effect this means the acts of God can

³³Garvie, pp. 376-377; Orr, p. 172.

³⁴Neve, II, pp. 150-151; Schultz, p. 175.

³⁵Barth, From Rousseau To Ritschl, pp. 394-395.

³⁶Brunner, The Mediator, pp. 62-63; Mackintosh, pp. 161-162.

only be known in the activities of man. Justification then can only be known in the changed relationship of man to God from the subjective side. Here the objective meaning of justification is translated wholly into the subjective.³⁷

The reformation was justification-centered, but the centuries which followed witnessed an astonishing decline in the importance given to this doctrine. The view of human autonomy of ancient classical thought came to the fore again with great force in the Aufklärung, via the Renaissance. The old center of gravity returned and the emphasis shifted from the divine to the human aspects of the divine-human relationship. Human life was no longer conceived of as dependent, but as something which existed in its own right. The sphere of God's activity was limited and the autonomy of the human spirit, and especially of human reason, was underscored. Ritschl's view of the divine-human relationship was essentially that of the Aufklärung.³⁸

Where reformation theology emphasized the total depravity of man and his distance from God, the Aufklärung viewed the divine-human relationship as a continuum. Thus in Ritschl's theology justification as an act of God in the reformation sense was impossible. Justification was an awakening to the knowledge that God is love and that man's feelings of guilt are unfounded. Man needed to awaken to his own true nature.³⁹ At the heart of it, man pronounces forgiveness upon himself in Ritschl's theology. He may not have intended precisely this result, but self-justification is nevertheless the

³⁷Orr, pp. 164-165; see also Barth, From Rousseau To Ritschl, p. 397;

³⁸Garvie, p. 382.

³⁹Lehmann, pp. 380-381, 415, 432-434, 508.

³⁹McGiffert, The Rise Of Modern Religious Ideas, p. 206.

outcome in his theology.⁴⁰

MORTIFICATION

There is no doctrine of mortification in the theology of Albrecht Ritschl. In a theological system where sin is not taken seriously, there is no place for mortification. In so far as the word, sin, has any meaning at all it refers to ignorance. There is no old man who must die, to make the new life possible. There is no holiness or wrath of God directed against sin. Justification means the transfer of the knowledge that God is love from the Founder of the Kingdom of God to its members. When their ignorance is turned into the knowledge that God is love men are justified and redeemed.

Ritschl does, however, have something to say about the formation of Christian character. This cannot be accomplished by "ascetic practices," but only by striving after virtue. Evil inclinations are to be replaced with virtuous practices. Ascetic methods arise from a dualistic view of the world with a low estimate of the "flesh." Not only do such ascetic and monastic practices as celibacy, poverty, and obedience to superiors not insure moral development, they actually threaten it.¹

In one place, speaking of believers being crucified with Christ, Ritschl wrote,

⁴⁰Lehmann, pp. 488, 559, 563.

¹Instruction In The Christian Religion, pp. 230-231, 237, 240, 262.

if the "crucifixion" of believers is to be understood as an inward process, then it means the transformation takes place through self-discipline and the attainment of virtue, and each act of dying to the flesh is immediately recompensed by the bliss of living to the spirit.²

This means that it is quite impossible to speak of any conformity to Christ's death, i.e. mortification, which is the work of God. The only mortification that can possibly take place is by self-discipline. Mortification is understood wholly in a moralistic and anthropocentric way.

Similarly, Ritschl wrote of the new life,

the new birth or begetting by God, or admission into the relation of sonship with God, coincides with justification, as well as with the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. This again is the same as admission into the community.³

In other words, there is no new birth which God effects, there is only the purely human act by which a man joins the Kingdom of God. Once a member of the kingdom, growth in the new life simply takes place by "education."⁴ There is no death/life, there is only the intention to join the moral Kingdom of God with all other men of good will and the gradual process of education in the moral life which follows.

Where there is no mortification because there is nothing to be mortified, the process is wholly anthropocentric. There is really no need for God. We

²Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 479-480.

³Underlining mine. Instruction In The Christian Religion, pp. 227-228.

⁴Ibid.

must conclude that where mortification is denied, and man's need for mortification, there can be no opus alienum Dei. God's work does not come into consideration. God has no work. Man is in complete control.

ANFECHTUNG

According to Luther, Anfechtung takes place when the Christian is confronted by the God of wrath. When met by the law which condemns him and the cross of the Christian which brings him persecution because he is a Christian, his faith is tried. In a theology where God cannot be conceived as a God of wrath, where His opus alienum is denied, and where neither the law nor the cross of the Christian has the meaning or the function it possessed in reformation theology, the conception of Anfechtung can have no place.

Ritschl rarely uses the term, preferring the Melancthonian phrase, "terrors of conscience," or even the Pietistic, "Busskampf." He proceeded in the following way.

we ought never to allow ourselves to forget that there were altogether special circumstances which led Luther so unweariedly to proclaim the comfort of troubled consciences in the good news of justification through Christ. It arose from the circumstance that Luther had pursued so long and so passionately the opposite course of seeking to make himself just with God through the merit of his ascetic works. From his recollection of the energy with which he had sought to carry out

this error of his monkish life, Luther derived a great part of that persistency, which he showed in laying so frequent and urgent stress on the consolation of the gospel and the method of its appropriation.

Here Luther's teaching about Anfechtung is ascribed to the "error of his monkish profession" and his "nominalistic education." His struggles of conscience derived from a "false notion of piety" and the whole was a result of his "hypochondriac malady."¹ In a word, Luther's conception of Anfechtung and his concern for the consolation of the angefechtene conscience was a psychological abnormality aggravated by his years spent in a monastic society.²

Next, according to Ritschl's view of the matter, Luther was guilty of leaving

the believer's standing as a Christian exposed to these agitations of feeling which he had experienced as a monk, owing to his erroneous attitude to the law.³

In this he meant that Luther's view of regarding the law as one of God's means for effecting Anfechtung was also in error and that by it Luther sought to make his own personal experience normative for all Christians.

¹ To quote again the very illuminating passage in Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 163.

² Ritschl's personality was such that he had little sympathy with religious feelings of "the broken and contrite spirit," witness his lumping of all forms of religious experience together under the term "mysticism" and his bitter polemic against it. Thus he is described by many writers. At the same time he was personally rigidly moralistic.

³ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 161-162.

Melanchthon too is blamed for prescribing "torturing feelings" as an element in repentance and a "precondition" of justification.⁴ The mistake of Lutheran Orthodoxy, following Melanchthon, was to limit repentance to the "terrors of conscience" and thus to contrition for "saints and backsliders alike."⁵

insistence on a 'conflict of penitence,' under the conditions laid down by Luther and Melanchthon...as a rule for all, is...inconsistent with that idea of education through Church fellowship to which all the other principles of the Reformers point. Feelings of pain at one's own sin, which are compared to the terrors of death and hell, thereby fall under the category of emotions which belong to the domain of the purely natural life...⁶

There is no mortification possible. There is nothing to mortify. Therefore "the transition from repentance to the assurance of pardon" is not a death/life, but a "self-consistent process" of education. An educational process precludes "shifting feelings" of terror "comparable to the natural fear of death or the thought of hell."⁷

The demand for a 'conflict of penitence,' in the sense of an excitation of natural emotions of anxiety and despair, simply suggests an aimless attitude of mind, in

⁴Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 161-162. See also I, p. 177.

⁵Ibid., III, pp. 170-172.

⁶Ibid., pp. 164-166.

⁷Ibid.

which one only removes oneself further from the possible peace offered by grace.⁸

Repentance does not involve "stormy sensations" of self-disapproval.⁹ Such conflicts lead only to either despair or hypocrisy.¹⁰

we shall have to conclude therefrom that the distinction of repentance into remorse, arising from the law, and faith arising from the general promise, constitutes in religious and moral respects the weakest side of the Lutheran system.¹¹

Ritschl could see no need for anything so thoroughgoing as a death/life taking place in man and so the conception of Anfechtung was altogether foreign to his thinking. Nor was Ritschl's God one who would lead an assault on man's faith in order to bring it to new depths and new strength. Ritschl's God was too "constant," too "static" to take part in the work of actual rapprochement with man. By definition, in accordance with his epistemology, God could enter into no such relationship with man.

In addition, Ritschl rejected the ordo salutis of Lutheran Orthodoxy as too formal and mechanical. Certainly the stages in the spiritual process described in the Orthodox ordo salutis were artificial at best, but there was a deeper reason for Ritschl's rejection. The ordo salutis had originally been framed in an attempt to distinguish accurately the work of divine grace from man's exercise of his own freedom. Ritschl steadfastly

⁸Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 164-166.

⁹Ibid., the same point is made on pp. 200-201.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 329-330.

¹¹Ibid., I, p. 517.

refused to make this distinction.¹² The reason is not far to find. There is no divine activity, about which man can know anything at all, apart from human activity. The role of God described in the conception of the opus alienum and opus proprium Dei is precluded by Ritschl's philosophical pre-suppositions.

LAW

Luther believed that the ability to distinguish between the law and the gospel was the sine qua non of the theologian. His own doctrine of the law proved to be a stumbling-block to both Melancthon and Spener. We must now measure the theology of Ritschl by this same standard.

We have already noted that Ritschl depreciated Luther's distinction which saw repentance arising from the law and faith from the gospel. He called it the "weakest side of the Lutheran system."¹ Instead he wanted them understood as very closely related. The law was given that man should keep it. If it produces a consciousness of sin in man as well, the gospel grants forgiveness of sins. But it does not stop there. The gospel has as its purpose making possible the fulfilling of the law.² We might say that this is to reduce both law and gospel to law, but that would be to anticipate.

Theodosius Harnack placed Luther's clear distinction between law and

¹²Garvie, pp. 337, 369-370.

¹Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 517.

²Ibid., pp. 170-171.

gospel at the very center of Luther's theology.³ Ritschl expressly disagreed.⁴ Instead he contended that Luther significantly altered his theology, particularly his doctrine of law and gospel, under the influence of Melancthon. For his purpose, Ritschl utilized the now familiar conception of the younger and the older Luther. The younger Luther had taught the correct understanding of repentance.

Luther maintained in his earliest reforming period that the only genuine repentance is that which springs from faith, and that the penitent ought not to be detained under fears inspired by the law...⁵

That is to say, the only genuine repentance springs from faith which is in turn produced by the gospel. Harnack was writing solely about the older Luther who taught that repentance was produced by the law.⁶

According to Ritschl the younger Luther taught repentance is not effected by fear of the law, but by a love for righteousness. The latter is produced by the gospel. The law ought to be preached only to those who already believe. It was Melancthon who reversed this sequence, requiring the law to be preached before the gospel in the Unterricht der Visitatoren of 1528. Agricola objected to this teaching of Melancthon and began the Antinomian Controversy. According to Ritschl, Agricola was correct. Luther

³ This is clear throughout Luthers Theologie. For simply one example of the way in which he did so, see pp. 582-583.

⁴ Following C.I. Nitzsch and F.C. Baur.

⁵ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 160-161.

⁶ Schultz, pp. 168-169.

⁷ Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 181-182.

sided with Melanchthon.⁸ To this error of Luther's, Ritschl attributed the low level of ethical attainment in Lutheran Orthodoxy and the hypocritical Busskampf of Pietism.⁹

To make Ritschl's disagreement with Luther more clear, it is necessary to note that Ritschl specifically objected to Luther's doctrine of the second use of the law, i.e. to convict of sin and therefore to lay bare the sinner's need for grace. Ritschl's own view of the law was what the Lutheran Confessions called the third use, i.e. as a guide for the Christian life, which as we have pointed out did not appear in Luther's own work.

Against this second use of the law, Ritschl wrote quite simply,

the penitence which flows from contemplation of particular sins, from legal fears, and from apprehension of future woe, only makes men hypocrites and greater sinners than before.¹⁰

This means that repentance which proceeds from the opus alienum Dei is hypocritical and unsound. As Luther is wrong here, so is St. Paul. He simply misunderstood the Old Testament conception of law.¹¹ What is basically wrong is that man should be required to recognize his ~~own~~ sin fully so that he may long for the redemption of the gospel.¹² No one ought to be swayed by Luther's

⁸Schultz, pp. 169-170. Agricola strove without success to save Lutheranism from the consequences. Calvin alone succeeded in saving the Reformation for a part of the evangelical Church.

⁹On the contrary, the argument of this thesis would demonstrate that these errors in Orthodoxy and Pietism developed precisely because Luther's dialectic of law and gospel was not understood and preserved.

¹⁰Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 144.

¹¹Ibid., III, pp. 305, 509; Schultz, pp. 177-178; Orr, p. 100.

¹²Instruction In The Christian Religion, p. 202.

attempt to give "universal validity" to his own personal experience, requiring that the conscience be "crushed by the law" so that it may be "pacified" by the gospel.

I doubt whether a doctrine of faith so founded on individual religious experience has a churchly character.¹³

Humility is not a quality that derives from a constant consciousness of sin, but it is a virtue of "self-possession" which makes it possible to view both unpleasant and pleasant experiences as the dispensation of God.¹⁴ In other words, humility is a kind of faith in the providence of God. It is not, as Luther defined it, a consciousness of sinfulness before God effected by the law.

If many are prepared unto obedience by alarm of conscience before they know or experience God's grace, this initialis timor only illustrates the variety of ways in which Christ draws men to himself or prepares them for striving after goodness. It is thus hereby declared that ordinary education within the community of believers makes it unreasonable to expect that in the case of every one poenitentia should be introduced by marked appearances of dread of judgment, and of struggles between conscience and the law.¹⁵

In no case are such experiences of judgment before the law to be considered

¹³Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 567-568.

¹⁴Instruction In The Christian Religion, p. 236.

¹⁵Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 194-195.

normative. Preferable to any such conviction of sin is the more gradual process of education, involving steady moral growth. Education is defeated if it does nothing more than effect "childlike fear," a "terror of disobeying the commands of elders." At best such means can effect a certain discipline, but they are never more than a transitional stage, else children would never attain independence.¹⁶ This last passage is instructive, the Christian experiencing fear of the law is immature, made overly dependent on his divine parent. If he is to learn maturity and independence, he must put fear of the law behind him. This is the Aufklärung creed of the autonomy of man. He no longer lives with any sense of dependence on God. This man, whom Kant described, is one

whose confidence in his powers of moral self-discipline and triumph more than half renders him deaf to the call to penitence and the message of pardoning mercy.¹⁷

In place of the doctrine of the second use of the law, Ritschl contended, like Agricola and Spener before him, that repentance proceeds from the gospel. This was also the belief of the Aufklärung.¹⁸ We must look again at his strange reading of Luther's teaching about the dialectic of the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei by which he set out to put Luther on his side.

Luther affirms that the sorrow of repentance, and grief, and despondency, on account of sin, presuppose the secret working of divine forgiveness and restoring grace. Even when God appears to condemn the man, He is begin-

¹⁶ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 178-179.

¹⁷ Mackintosh, p. 24.

¹⁸ Schultz, p. 37.

ning to declare him righteous; while He is wounding him, it is His will to heal him; whom He slays, him He makes alive. So that when man feels himself near unto condemnation, grace is already at work upon him, and while he apprehends an outpouring of wrath, the mercy of God is actually laying hold of him.¹⁹

His conclusion as to the meaning of this passage was:

If, therefore, repentance has its foundation and its value in grace, then it must proceed upon the faith that is conscious of that grace, and it cannot be regarded as a legal work.²⁰

Luther's meaning was that the relationship between the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei is dialectical. The grace of God is known precisely through His wrath. Ritschl's interpretation, finally, means that the opus alienum Dei is an illusion. The opus proprium Dei has been there all along, not recognized by the sinner. What is necessary is that man be freed from the illusion of the wrath of God.

Ritschl contended that Luther's original position was that repentance was the effect of faith, itself an effect of grace. Therefore, the penitent must recognize that though he suffers from "terrors of conscience," he is really under the "educative grace of God." No man could experience such "terrors" except by faith in the Lawgiver as Savior. Without faith in the Lawgiver's intention to save, no repentance would take place. Ritschl felt the

²⁰ Justification And Reconciliation, I, p. 143. On this point in a more general way see also pp. 144, 151-152, 192-194 where he stated his preference for Calvin's view that repentance proceeds from the gospel.

example of Christ was a far better way of evoking repentance than the law, because at the same time it presented man with an "ideal of the God-pleasing life." This is simply to say that the third use of the law as a guide for the Christian life is preferable to the second use of the law which effects a consciousness of sin.²¹

For Luther this was quite impossible. To take Christ as an example, in an imitatio Christi fashion, was to confront the righteousness of God as a judgment on all of man's righteousness. To seek to have Christ according to the third use of the law, as a guide for life, is to have Him according to the second use, as a condemnation of man's sinfulness. For man cannot realize "the thousandth part" of the righteousness of Christ.

Totally unlike Luther, Ritschl, in Aufklärung fashion, believed that man's own sense of "honor and dignity" could contribute to repentance.²² The law creates a consciousness of sin which throws man upon the grace of God in his need. This was how Luther viewed it, but this view of the matter did not appeal to Ritschl. Instead he preferred to believe in man's moral progress, urged on by the moral ideal of Christ and by his own "honor and dignity."

the continuance of the consciousness of sin and of the need of forgiveness, and therefore too repentance for our recurring offenses, are called for by the very fact that in Him who brings us the revelation of grace we recognize the moral ideal, but in such a way that our education in the Church as a rule excludes that passion-

²¹Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 166-167.

²²Ibid., pp. 166-167.

ate and acute form of conversion which occurs in special cases.²³

Ritschl's view of the law excludes its second use and adopts the third use as an educative function leading to gradual moral development. Ritschl's was a wholly anthropocentric interest in the law contributing to man's moral growth. Luther's conception of the second use of the law, like his conception of the wrath of God, acts as a sentinel against such anthropocentric interpretations. For the second use of the law can only be exercised by God and thus underscores His sovereignty, His activity, His opus alienum. The third use of the law can be understood as an ally of man's autonomous growth in goodness, quite apart from God.

Kant taught that the law, which is universal and absolutely binding, man produces autonomously.²⁴ To him belongs the credit for restating the proper doctrine of the law based on a moral view of the universe. Duty must be performed out of reverence for the law. This was to make the law the prime object of man's respect. Absolute reality confronted man in the form of an absolute obligation. The idea of a Lawgiver behind the law appears often as little more than an afterthought.²⁵ The law was placed in the center.

²³ Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 166-167.

²⁴ But let no man object that this assertion is Pelagian and so unsound, for he who cannot distinguish the Pelagian from the Kantian notion of freedom is in no position to pronounce a judgment in this matter. Ibid., I, p. 395.

Only a superficial criticism will hold it for an irreconcilable contradiction that the Reformers deduce the law from God, Kant from human freedom. Ibid., pp. 389-390.

²⁵ Baillie, Our Knowledge Of God, New York, 1959, pp. 157-161.

God was even spoken of as personified law.²⁶ However, such a view cannot regard the law as a tyrant in the Pauline sense or speak of victory over the law as Luther did.

This Kantian view of the law, emphasizing the self-confidence of man in his moral power, Ritschl followed faithfully. However, neither Kant nor Ritschl saw that the law, with the holiness of God behind it, does not increase man's self-confidence, but instead his guilt.²⁷ Luther understood very clearly that to see God in His majesty is to be terrified and destroyed. God is a holy God into whose presence man cannot come in his sinfulness. The saving God comes veiled in the humiliation of the crucified Christ. God veiled in Christ is gospel. Man dare not turn that gospel into law. It would destroy him.²⁸

THE CROSS OF THE CHRISTIAN

A theologian who could find no place for the opus alienum Dei, the wrath of God, Anfechtung, and the second use of the law could not be expected to find a place for Luther's teaching about the cross of the Christian. In so far as he discusses the matter at all, his argument turns on his repudiation of the idea of "retribution," the "penal value" of evil, and "the legal conception of punishment," all of which he attributes to Protestant Orthodoxy. The Aufklärung is to be praised for first abandoning these ideas and setting

²⁶Schultz, pp. 30-31.

²⁷Mackintosh, p. 24.

²⁸Baillie, Our Knowledge Of God, pp. 191-192.

that of "educative punishments" in their place.¹

Theology, though it has traditionally done so, dare not take for granted, as the supreme rule of the Divine world-order, the recompensing of human actions by rewards and punishments, thus explaining the world-order on the analogy of the State or civil society.²

Jesus' teaching shows that "destructive natural events" are not to be understood as punishment for individual sins. The view of evils as punishments can only be understood in terms of individual consciousness of guilt.³

Earthly evils have the "value of punishment" for those who remain sinners, for those who are reconciled they have the value of means of education. Protestant Orthodoxy failed to give proper place to this subjective factor.⁴ The reason for this failure is that men who as Christians regard evils as educative, prior to their reconciliation regarded them as punishments, and this fact remains in their memory. From the standpoint of reconciliation as an accomplished fact such evils can only be seen as educative. All feelings of the opposite kind must be set aside as "delusive."⁵

The misfortunes which come upon anyone can only be determined by himself to be divine punishments for sin, when he so reckons them to himself because of a feeling of guilt.⁶

¹Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 362.

²Ibid., 49-50.

³Ibid., 355-357.

⁴Ibid., 47-48.

⁵Ibid., 49-50, 323-325.

⁶Instruction In The Christian Religion, p. 210; see also Justification And Reconciliation, III, p. 384.

Instead of understanding divine-human relations on the "analogy of the State," they should be understood on the analogy of the family. Evils which befall men are to be understood as "paternal education of children."⁷

"Lordship over the world" creates patience to endure the evils which come from the world by subordinating them to man's freedom. The peace with God Christians know makes it possible for them to assert their freedom over these unavoidable experiences. Knowing that these evils are not divine punishments, Christians can accept even persecution as a testing of the endurance of their faith. This patience arises from faith in the providence of God as "fatherly leading" even through the most difficult experiences.⁸

Many Christians could probably accept such a view, although in reality it offers very little. It is an impoverished view of the Scriptural teaching. The following criticisms must be voiced against it, when comparison is made with Luther's conception of the cross of the Christian. First, any activity of God in the whole, any opus alienum Dei, is denied. God, who is love alone, cannot utilize the evils which confront man from life in His relationship with man. The evils which assault human life are all "natural." They simply arise from nature and can in no way be utilized by God as "allies." All such activity of God is impossible, by definition, given Ritschl's philosophical position.

Second, victory over these evils has no other meaning than a human change in attitude, i.e. it is wholly subjective and anthropocentric. Man who once regarded these evils as punishments because he was conscious of guilt now

⁷Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 303-304, 355-357.

⁸Ibid., pp. 450, 506-507; Instruction In The Christian Religion, p. 238.

regards them as educative. In his subjective change of attitude toward them he is victorious.

Third, lordship over the world, as victory over the evils with which life confronts man, is not really different from the Stoicism of the classical age. The only possible difference is Ritschl's use of the conception of God to insure man's victory over the world. Faith in the providence of God makes possible man's reacting stoically to the evils of life. Such a view simply leaves God out.

AUTONOMY

In conclusion, it is necessary to see Ritschl's thought in relationship to the emphasis on the autonomy of man which has flourished especially since the Aufklärung. He was critical of Protestant Orthodoxy for perpetuating the "dualistic conception of the universe" of the Middle Ages. Equally to be condemned was the "ascetic melancholy" which led to a rather pessimistic view of man. Fortunately the Aufklärung banished the dualistic outlook forever and replaced it with a more optimistic monism. When sin was no longer overemphasized, it was possible to have a much more optimistic view of man.¹ The focus shifted from the next life to this one, from the state of man's soul to the essential goodness and perfectibility of human nature.²

¹ Justification And Reconciliation, I, pp. 335-336; Aulen, Christus Victor, pp. 137-138.

² Greene, Theodore M., "Introduction," Religion Within The Limits Of Reason Alone, by Immanuel Kant, E.T. Greene, T.M. and Hudson, H.H., Chicago, 1934, pp ix-x.

Kant feared any emphasis on the activity of God which would limit the autonomy of man and lead him to wait passively on the action of God rather than assert his own freedom. In insisting that the law was self-authenticated, Kant meant to make any dependence on God negligible. The moral self may from time to time receive some help from without, but it was better if it did not rely on anything outside itself but trusted in itself alone.³

According to this anthropocentric view of God, He is not regarded as active in man's reconciliation, but instead merely guarantees man's Selbstbehauptung.⁴ However this can be accomplished only by forsaking entirely the theocentric view of the Scripture and the reformation. This is exactly what was done. Man became the starting-point of theological inquiry and the measure of all things, including God.⁵ Ritschl was not really concerned with the activity of which God was the subject, but with that of which man was the subject. Instead of beginning with the great acts of God recorded in Scripture, he began with man's moral and religious experience. He studied man's consciousness of sin and his consciousness of forgiveness. This was the limitation he himself imposed on his theology.⁶

The result was a theology which had nothing of any significance to say about the activity of God. It was, as Barth writes of Kant, "anthropology and nothing but anthropology."⁷ Like Kant, Ritschl rejected all forms of religion except that which asks only what man can do for his own salvation.⁸

³ Barth, From Rousseau To Ritschl, p.184; Mackintosh, p.23; Greene, pp.lxxiv-lxxv.

⁴ Aulen, Christus Victor, pp. 137-138; The Faith Of The Christian Church, pp. 26-27, 123-124.

⁵ Barth, From Rousseau To Ritschl, p. 188.

⁶ Brunner, The Divine Human Encounter, pp. 35-37; Moore, pp. 95-96.

⁷ Barth, From Rousseau To Ritschl, p. 187.

⁸ Schultz, p. 28; Mackintosh, pp. 161-162.

Yet Christianity is a religion which does not emphasize what man can do of his own strength, but rather what God has done for his reconciliation. As Principal Baillie pointed out very clearly, whoever does not confront God in the gospel of what He has done for man, must confront Him in His wrath. This same insight is found in Luther's conception of the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei. The opus alienum Dei is a judgment on all of man's own righteousness, the product of his own strength. Only when this judgment has been passed may man receive the opus proprium Dei. For man to seek God in his own righteousness is never to find the opus proprium Dei, but always to meet the opus alienum Dei instead. To seek to approach God in one's own righteousness is always theologia glorie, while God will be known only through the theologia crucis.⁹

A fundamental premise of Ritschl's theology was that there is no validity in contrasting the activity of God with the activity of man as though they were in opposition to each other. The divine activity cannot be understood at all except in terms of man's response to that activity. Ritschl's point was that theology cannot be written from the standpoint of God, but is only "intelligible" when written from the standpoint of man's moral and religious experience.

In dependence on Kant, Ritschl made the self-activity of the human spirit the primary element in his conception of morality and the pivotal condition of intelligible, i.e. valid, scientific theology.¹⁰

⁹Baillie, Our Knowledge Of God, pp. 163-164, 191-193. We are indebted to Principal Baillie for a most helpful discussion of the correlation drawn by the Ritschlians between Luther and Kant. See also Luther's Heidelberg Disputation,

LW 31, pp. 52-53.

¹⁰Lehmann, p. 480.

Behind his denial of any contradiction between the activity of God and the activity of man is the fact that he tended to identify them.¹¹

In this context it is necessary to look again at the following fundamental statements of his.

If what is wanted is to write theology on the plan not merely of a narrative of the great deeds done by God, but of a system representing the salvation He has wrought out, then we must exhibit the operations of God...in such a way as shall involve an analysis of the corresponding voluntary activities in which man appropriates the operations of God.¹²

If what is intended in Dogmatics is merely to describe objectively Divine operations that means the abandonment of the attempt to understand their practical bearing. For apart from voluntary activity, through which we receive and utilize for our own blessedness the operations of God, we have no means of understanding objective dogmas as religious truths.¹³

The effect of these statements is simply to limit the divine activity to human activity. This position is totally anthropocentric.

Where the work of God is not understood as something real outside of and apart from man, the dialectic of God's wrath/love, law/gospel, death/

¹¹Lehmann, pp. 154, 475-481.

¹²Justification And Reconciliation, III, pp. 34-35.

¹³Ibid.

life cannot be held. For this conception speaks of a work of God man cannot work for himself. With his faith in man's autonomy and his view of man's capacities and history, Ritschl, like the Aufklärung, found the doctrine of the opus alienum Dei unreasonable. What was left was a religion of man. For all practical purposes God was dead. This was the theologia gloriae par excellence.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

(1906-1945)

Blue smoke
Extra Strong

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

The young theologian who went on the wireless on the evening after Hitler's seizure of power in 1933 to discuss what "leadership" meant¹, and who later came to the "costly grace" of martyrdom², continues to gain stature in contemporary theology.³

Dietrich Bonhoeffer grew up in the academic atmosphere of the University of Berlin. Later he studied there under von Harnack, Seeberg, Holl, Lietzmann, and Lütgert. He wrote his dissertation with Seeberg and as late as 1933 still considered himself to be a disciple of Holl.⁴ In this way he was a descendant of the nineteenth century liberal tradition. He described himself as "a modern theologian, (who) is still aware of the debt we owe to liberal theology."⁵ He still felt obligated to raise the questions with which liberal theology was concerned.⁶ In his concern that the world be taken seriously, for example, and that a genuine effort be made to under-

¹"Wandlungen des Führerbegriffes" and "Der Führer und der einzelne," 1933, Gesammelte Schriften, Band II, München, 1959, pp. 19-38.

²Leibholz, G., "Memoir," Nachfolge, 1937, E.T. The Cost Of Discipleship, London, 1959, pp. 11, 21.

³Richmond, James, "Beyond All Reason," Four Anchors From The Stern, Ed. Richardson, Alan, London, 1963, p. 36.

⁴Bethge, Eberhard, "The Editing And Publishing Of The Bonhoeffer Papers," Andover Newton Quarterly, Vol. LII, No. 2, December 1959, pp. 15-17. He himself spoke of having been brought up on the theology of Albrecht Ritschl. "The Theology Of Crisis And Its Attitude Toward Philosophy And Science," 1931, Gesammelte Schriften, Band III, p. 118.

⁵Widerstand und Ergebung, E.T. Letters And Papers From Prison, London, 1959, p. 128. Principal Baillie has pointed out that he was much more fully aware of this debt than is Karl Barth. "Some Reflections On The Changing Theological Scene," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, Vol. XII, No. 2, January 1957, p. 8.

⁶Bethge, p. 17.

stand modern man as he is, Bonhoeffer was true to the best in the liberal heritage. For all of his concern for the "worldliness" of Christianity, however, he was never guilty of diluting the gospel.⁷

The primary influence on Bonhoeffer's work was the theology of Karl Barth. He belonged to the Dialectical movement in theology and was immensely indebted to it, so much so that in some quarters he was regarded as a kind of "Lutheran Karl Barth."⁸ He both espoused the Barthian theology and attempted to go beyond it to a new consideration of some of the questions raised by theological liberalism.⁹

There are two fundamental difficulties of interpretation, where Bonhoeffer's thought is involved, which need to be raised here in an introductory way. The first is the question of an "earlier" and a "later" Bonhoeffer. F. Sherman finds a fundamental discrepancy between The Cost Of Discipleship of 1937 and Letters And Papers From Prison of 1943-45. He finds this contradiction rooted in Bonhoeffer's attitude toward the world. His contention is that in the earlier work Bonhoeffer described the Christian life as a call to discipleship apart from the world, while in the later work it is described as a "religionless" life lived precisely in and for the world. Such a view is superficial and derives from a misreading of The Cost Of Discipleship.¹⁰ This latter work expressly calls the Christian to discipleship

⁷Minthe, Eckhard, "Bonhoeffer's Influence On The Younger Generation Of Ministers In Germany," E.T. by Gilmeur, S.M., Andover Newton Quarterly, Vol. 2, No. 1, September 1961, pp. 18-19.

⁸Marty, Martin E., "Problems And Possibilities In Bonhoeffer's Thought," The Place Of Bonhoeffer, Ed. Marty, M., New York, 1962, p. 12.

⁹Bethge, pp. 8, 15; Richmond, pp. 37-39.

¹⁰Sherman, Franklin E., "The Problem Of A 'Trinitarian' Social Ethic, A Study In The Theological Foundations Of Christian Social Ethics With Special Reference To W. Elert And D. Bonhoeffer," Unpublished Dissertation, The University Of Chicago, June, 1961, pp. 162, 185, 188.

in and for the world.

A far more serious contention is that of M. Ebersole who speaks of a "theological about-face" on the issue of "religion." The "early" Bonhoeffer had regarded man as a "religious being" and Christianity as meaningful only as related to man's religious needs. Christianity was regarded as the answer to human extremity, the "boundary-situations" of human life, e.g. anxiety, guilt, death. The boundary situation was the occasion for man's salvation. On the other hand, the later Bonhoeffer spoke of "religionless" Christianity and did not regard Christianity as a "religion of salvation." The modern man who has learned to live without religion drives such a God and such a Christianity to the periphery of his life, for he is increasingly master of his life and less and less the victim of "extremity." Ebersole contends that this later point of view is very different from the one expressed in Bonhoeffer's earlier theological writings. This is a contention which must be treated with much greater respect than the former one, for it contains much that is true. For the moment, let us note that Ebersole greatly exaggerates the degree to which the "early" Bonhoeffer held a "traditional" view of these matters and the "later" Bonhoeffer a more "radical" one. The discontinuity is more apparent than real.¹¹

On the other side of the question, E. Minthe points out quite rightly that Bonhoeffer himself refused to admit to any abrupt break in his thought.¹² E. Bethge concurs with this judgment, pointing out that the sources of "re-

¹¹ Ebersole, Mark C., Christian Faith And Man's Religion, New York, 1961, pp. 60, 71-73. An excellent treatment of Bonhoeffer.

¹² Minthe, p. 17. In this context see Bonhoeffer's remarks about The Cost Of Discipleship in Letters And Papers From Prison, pp. 124-125.

ligionless Christianity" are to be found in the "Christology of 1933" and other early writings.¹³ J. Godsey sees the later work of Bonhoeffer as an unbroken development from his earlier work. While the new dimensions in his thinking in Letters And Papers From Prison are unexpected, they do not represent discontinuity but rather a "consummation" of his earlier thought.¹⁴ The weight of the evidence is on the side of this latter group which maintains the continuity in Bonhoeffer's thought.

The second fundamental difficulty in the interpretation of Bonhoeffer's thought is its unsystematic and fragmentary character. He wrote at different times in his life to very different situations. The work for which he is best known is a piecemeal collection of letters and papers written during his imprisonment under the Gestapo. What we have of it survived almost by chance, much of it was lost, some of it deliberately destroyed to protect individuals named. The Ethics was never completed. It is difficult to systematize Bonhoeffer's thinking and even more difficult to develop some of the ideas which his tragic death left only briefly sketched. In some of his most provocative thinking, that about the "world come of age" and "religionless" Christianity, it is his critique of religion which comes through most strongly. The positive side, the reconstruction, is the most vague and

¹³"Forward," Sanctorum Communio, E.T. by Smith, R.G., London, 1963, p. 7; see also his "The Editing And Publishing Of The Bonhoeffer Papers," pp. 16, 22.

¹⁴Godsey, John D., The Theology Of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Philadelphia, 1960, pp. 203, 261, 264. Godsey draws parallels between his earlier and later works, pp. 260-261. On the whole, however, this is a very disappointing book. It consists for the greater part of synopses of Bonhoeffer's various works. There is no attempt at genuine systematization and the paraphrases do as much to obscure as they do to illumine Bonhoeffer's writings.

least explored. Bonhoeffer has asked the questions which, because of his death, must be left for others to answer.¹⁵

Barth called Bonhoeffer an "impulsive, visionary thinker" who, during his last years, moved from one "provisional" position to another. In this sense his ideas were impulsive reactions to the circumstances in which he found himself. They were so conditioned by the situation, one might rather speak of "prophetic oracles" than theology, in Minthe's phrase. Barth called them "enigmatic." We must not lose sight of this limitation in his last work in all that follows.

THE WORLD COME OF AGE

Eberhard Bethge has remarked that when the *Ethics* was published in early 1949, the reaction was scarcely audible. It was only after the publication of Letters And Papers From Prison that Bonhoeffer's other works received the consideration due them.¹ It was his thinking about the world come of age and "religionless" Christianity which evoked the response.

That thinking proceeded in this way. In the medieval synthesis, the two spheres of the sacred and the secular were clearly defined and the secular world was decidedly subservient to the sacred. The modern world began with the break-up of the medieval synthesis in renaissance and reformation. The renaissance represented the resurgence of the classical view of man.

¹⁵Minthe, pp. 13-16.

¹⁶A letter of Barth's to Landessuperintendent P.W. Herrenbrück, 2 December 1952, Die mündige Welt, Band I, München, 1959, p. 121; Minthe, pp. 15-16.

¹Bethge, p. 2

It was what Bonhoeffer called, in another context, "the revolt of the natural against grace."²

The secular was no longer seen as little more than an ante-chamber to the sacred, but as something which had value in itself. Man saw himself as free and responsible for his own life. This recognition of man's autonomy, the significance of his secular life, of the "diesseits", was a positive gain. It was not in essence in opposition to Christianity.³

In the reformation, Luther was called out of the cloister back into the world. He had once renounced the secular to become a "religious." Now he renounced the "otherworldliness" of the sacred sphere to live the Christian life ⁱⁿ the only place ^{where} it could be lived, in "worldly society."⁴

By renaissance and reformation the medieval synthesis was broken. "The corpus christianum is resolved into its true constituents, the corpus Christi and the world." The secular as such was justified and man freed from the "chaperonage" of the Church.⁵ Man's destiny in this world was affirmed.

However in throwing off the medieval world view, the modern world strongly emphasized the autonomy of man. The corpus christianum was broken and the world became hostile to the corpus Christi. The world had known Christ and had turned its back on Him.⁶ It was no longer possible to relate the whole of life to God. Instead work was carried on in religion, politics, philosophy, and natural science etsi deus non daretur. The universe and

² Ethik, 1949, Ed. Bethge, E., E.T. Ethics by Smith, N.D., London, 1955, p. 28.

³ Smith, Ronald Gregor, The New Man, London, 1956, pp. 37-42.

⁴ The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 38-41, for an excellent discussion of this point. Smith, p. 42.

⁵ Ethics, pp. 31, 33, 36.

⁶ Ibid., p. 44; Smith, p. 45.

history were understood as self-subsisting. The autonomy of man and of the world was underscored.⁷ In some quarters the concept of God was seen, in fact, as the great enemy of man's coming of age. It was believed necessary that man throw off his dependence on a heavenly Parent, in order to exercise his independence fully.

Bonhoeffer was certainly not the first to make the observation that the world had come of age. Kant had written in 1784, in answer to the question, "What is Enlightenment?"

The Enlightenment represents man's emergence from a self-inflicted state of minority. A minor is one who is incapable of making use of his understanding without guidance from someone else. This minority is self-inflicted whenever its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in a lack of determination and courage to make use of it without the guidance of another. Sapere aude! Have the courage to make use of your own understanding, is therefore the watchword of the Enlightenment.⁸

What is more properly Bonhoeffer's contribution is reversing the perennial complaint of the Church about contemporary secularization. Bonhoeffer welcomed that secularization and rightly emphasized that Christianity had helped bring it about. His own concern was how to reclaim for Christ a world which has come of age.⁹

⁷Letters And Papers From Prison, pp. 120-121.

⁸What Is Enlightenment?, 1784, quoted in Barth, From Rousseau To Ritschl, p. 152.

⁹Berger, Peter L., "Camus, Bonhoeffer And The World Come Of Age," II, The Christian Century, April 15, 1959, pp. 450-451; Minthe, p. 22.

Man come of age is autonomous. Through the application of scientific method, he has put nature under his feet and acquired a mastery over her never before known.¹⁰ He finds that he does not have to utilize the concept of God to account for the origin of the universe, or for the foundation of morality, or for the weather! He is finding his own answers to the problems of life without any reliance on the conception of God.¹¹

The movement beginning about the thirteenth century towards the autonomy of man (under which head I place the discovery of the laws by which the world lives and manages in science, social and political affairs, art, ethics, and religion) has in our time reached a certain completion. Man has learned to cope with all questions of importance without recourse to God as a working hypothesis.¹²

The world has a new realization of itself, a new understanding of the laws which govern its existence, and is very sure of itself. Everything in the world today is getting along without God as well as before.¹³ Modern man

¹⁰ Ethics, pp. 34-35.

¹¹ Jenkins, Daniel, Beyond Religion, London, 1962, p. 85; Robinson, John A. T., "The Debate Continues," The Honest To God Debate, Ed. Edwards, D.L., London, 1963, pp. 268-269; Wentz, Frederick K., "Lay Renaissance: Europe And America," The Christian Century, May 13, 1959, p. 576. The Bishop of Woolwich contends that the world come of age is a revolt against four ways of viewing the world which have been intimately bound up with the presentation of the Christian gospel in the past: the Metaphysical which reaches beyond the empirical, a supernaturalistic world-view, the mythological character of much Biblical history, and the "religious." "The Debate

¹² Continues, pp. 249-268.

¹³ Letters And Papers From Prison, pp. 106-107.

¹³ Ibid.

confidently holds his destiny in his own hands. He appears to be perfectly self-sufficient. Full of the Promethæan spirit, he is confident that with his science and technology he is perfectly capable of manipulating nature and history in such a way that the future of his race will be safe and secure. He is confident he can conquer whatever obstacles there may be in the way.¹⁴

Bonhoeffer wrote that the world come of age and the man who inhabits it appear to be moving toward "a time of no religion at all." Men today cannot be religious any more. Christianity has based itself on the "religious premise" of man. Today this premise simply no longer exists, man is without religion.¹⁵

Thus Bonhoeffer asserted that religion is not something with which men may dispense, but it is something with which they have already dispensed. The common belief that man is religious by nature, that there is a religious a priori, is simply no longer true. He is no longer conscious of a "God-shaped blank" in his soul. The man of today is homo non religiosus. He is removed from the particular preoccupations and anxieties generally associated with religion. Questions about God, the meaning of life, the nature and destiny of man no longer receive attention. These "religious" questions are no longer taken seriously because they are no longer matters of genuine concern.¹⁶

In the past the Church had based its proclamation of the gospel on an

¹⁴ Ebersole, pp. 51, 59.

¹⁵ Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 91.

¹⁶ Ebersole, pp. 50-51; Richmond, pp. 36-37; Root, H.E., "Beginning All Over Again," Soundings, Ed. Vidler, A.R., Cambridge, 1963, p. 12.

appeal to religious experience, on a need for religion in some form or other which every man was to have felt deep within him. It had been assumed that man had a need for a God to whom to give himself, and in terms of whom to explain the world. It had been thought that man had an innate sense of sin and therefore a need for salvation.

Till now man has felt the need for a God, as a child feels the need for his father. He must be "there" to explain the universe, to protect him in his loneliness, to fill the gaps in his science, to provide the sanction for his morality.¹⁷

Christianity has proclaimed a gospel addressed to man's despair at his sinfulness, his anxiety about his salvation. Christ came not to save the righteous, but to bring sinners to repentance. Christianity, with its message of forgiveness, spoke to the despair, the destitution, the distress of man in his religious need. But man come of age is self-sufficient, he has outgrown the idea that he is dependent on God. He has overcome his helplessness, he is not anxious about his salvation. He has been freed from religion and its concerns. The anxieties which once frightened the human soul have been "domesticated;" man has become their master. This means that man is simply no longer anxious about guilt, or the absurdity of life, or the inevitability of death. He has come of age. He is "religionless."¹⁸

In this way God Himself is being edged out of the world come of age. Life appears perfectly livable without Him. Ever since Kant, He has been

¹⁷Robinson, J.A.T., "The Debate Continues," pp. 270-271; Honest To God, London, 1963, p. 23.

¹⁸Ebersole, pp. 59-60, 77, 178-180.

relegated to the "realm beyond experience."¹⁹

There is no longer any need for God as a working hypothesis....In the name of intellectual honesty these working hypotheses should be dropped or dispensed with as far as possible.²⁰

When the term God is used, it no longer connects with anything in most people's lives. Most modern men live for all practical purposes as if God did not exist.²¹

The frame of reference in which modern man does his thinking has made traditional religion and spirituality virtually meaningless to him. There is no point of contact in man to which the gospel possesses any relevance any longer.

When Bonhoeffer spoke of man's coming of age as a becoming "religionless," what meaning did he give to the term, religion? E. Bethge has defined four characteristics of religion in Bonhoeffer's view. First it is individualistic, hyperindividualistic. It is preoccupied with itself, with its "inwardness." It is self-contained, concerned with conscience. It may be self-sacrificial, but in an ascetic way. Second, it is metaphysical in that God as a supernatural being is brought in to complete human reality. Third, it lives on as a "quartier religieux,"²² a segment, a compartment of life shut off from the other quarters of life and as time goes on shunted

¹⁹ Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 114.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 121.

²¹ Pelz, Werner, "Editorial," Prism, April 1963, The Honest To God Debate, p. 229.

²² Robinson, J.A.T., "The Debate Continues," pp. 268-269.

more and more into an insignificant corner of life. Fourth, its God is a deus ex machina who is imported from outside to deliver His children when they are in trouble or need, from the "boundary-situations," but who can safely be ignored at the "center" of life.²³

In answering this same question, G. Ebeling emphasizes that for Bonhoeffer religion is the completion (Ergänzung) of reality through God. He subsumes the other concerns: thinking in two "spheres," preserving a "quarter" for God, experiencing God in "boundary-situations," the role of God as a "stopgap," dependence on God at the point of human weakness, inwardness and an individualistic understanding of salvation, under this one fundamental idea. Ebeling also makes clear that Bonhoeffer turned all of his criticism against "religious" man and at the same time spared "religionless" man, at least in his work which is extant. Bonhoeffer did not intend to applaud any crude "this-sidedness," which is a "being-complete without God." But he demanded that we recognize that modern man is complete without God, if God is understood simply as a compensation for man's weakness, or as the "other-side" (Jenseits) of man's boundaries.²⁴

In studying the world come of age and religionless man we must note Bonhoeffer's indebtedness to the Dialectical movement in theology to which he belonged. As is well-known, Barth followed Kant and Ritschl in their denial of natural theology. This anti-philosophical and anti-religious (in the sense of anti-mystical) stance derived from the critical thought of

²³ The Chicago Theological Seminary Register, February 1961, quoted by Jenkins, Beyond Religion, pp. 34-35; see also Marty, "Problems And Possibilities In Bonhoeffer's Thought," p. 17.

²⁴ Ebeling, Gerhard, "Die 'nicht-religiöse Interpretation biblischer Begriffe,'" Die mündige Welt, Band II, München, 1956, pp. 60-65.

Kant who, as we discussed in the last chapter, demonstrated that no knowledge of God's existence or nature could be gained by reasoning from the nature of the universe. This Kantianism was taken up again in the last half of the nineteenth century by the Ritschlian school. One of its members, W. Herrmann, was the teacher of Barth, while another of its members, A. von Harnack, was the teacher of Bonhoeffer. This anti-philosophical and anti-religious (anti-mystical) position was strongly underscored by Barth in his insistence that there is no knowledge whatever of God apart from his act in Christ, and therefore no natural theology possible. In this context he wrote about "The Revelation Of God As The Abolition Of Religion."²⁵ Here Barth remains an heir of the renaissance and the Aufklärung.²⁶ In all this Bonhoeffer followed his lead.

The relationship of Bonhoeffer's thought about "religionless" man to Barth's "abolition" of religion is obvious. Barth contrasts revelation and religion. The former rests on God's initiative, the latter is man's quest for God. If the latter quest were capable of success, the self-disclosure of God in revelation would have been unnecessary. In reality God's revelation is a judgment on all man's religion as unbelief and idolatry. As idolatry it seeks after gods which are not the true and living God. As unbelief it is man's attempt to justify and sanctify himself, to reconcile God to himself.²⁷

²⁵ The title of § 17, Die Kirchliche Dogmatik, E.T. Church Dogmatics, Eds. Bromiley, G.W. and Torrance, T.F., I/2, Edinburgh, 1956, pp. 280-361.

²⁶ Baillie, John, "Some Reflections On The Changing Theological Scene," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, Vol. XII, No. 2, New York, January 1957, p. 5; Richmond, pp. 37-38.

²⁷ Church Dogmatics, I/2, § 17, pp. 302-307, 310.

sin is always unbelief. And unbelief is always man's faith in himself. And this faith invariably consists in the fact that man makes the mystery of his responsibility his own mystery, instead of accepting it as the mystery of God. It is this faith which is religion. It is contradicted by the revelation attested in the New Testament, which is identical with Jesus Christ as the one who acts for us and on us.²⁸

Man's religion can be human pride's strongest citadel of defense against the grace of God. In this way it can become faith's greatest enemy.²⁹

The liberal theologians and the apologists of Christianity generally sought to maintain Christianity ever against the world come of age in a form of "innerness" or "subjectivity" which they called religion. Using religion in this sense they sought to hollow out a place for God in the world, but by so doing they permitted the world to assign Christ a place in the world. In this context Bonhoeffer always praised Barth in the strongest possible way as the single theologian who had broken with this "religionizing" of the gospel and the attendant secularization of the revelation of God in the liberal theology.³⁰

Barth was the first to realize the mistake that all these efforts (of liberal theology) were making in having as their objective the clearing of a space for re-

²⁸ Church Dogmatics, I/2, § 17, p. 314.

²⁹ Jenkins, Beyond Religion, p. 33; see also his "Religion And Coming Of Age," The Honest To God Debate, pp. 210-211.

³⁰ Prenter, Regin, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer und Karl Barths Offenbarungspositivismus," Die mündige Welt, Band III, München, 1960, pp. 13-15.

ligion in the world or against the world.

He called the God of Jesus Christ into the lists against religion, "pneuma against sarx."³¹

Voices have been raised against this use of the term religion. Daniel Jenkins contends that Barth and Bonhoeffer's definition of religion as man's search for God on his own terms is too limited a definition. Where this limitation is not recognized the whole reach of man's religious history in less negative aspects is discarded as well.³² The Archbishop of Canterbury has asked, is it possible that religion will no longer be the frame of a Christian's relationship to God? "Will not religion still be with us: reverence, awe, dependence, adoration, and penitence?" Bonhoeffer would certainly have answered in the affirmative.³³

Professor Alan Richardson has characterized Barth's and Bonhoeffer's definition of religion as man's self-righteousness, his works of "pietism" or "religiosity." He notes that "religionless" carries a different meaning in English than in German. It is true the German word Religion may carry more of a connotation of piety than its English counterpart. He contends that the Biblical view is that religion is not man's search for God, but God's search for men,³⁴ something of course of which Barth and Bonhoeffer are perfectly well aware.

In so far as Barth has inherited his polemic against religion from the

³¹Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 109.

³²"Religion And Coming Of Age," pp. 210-211.

³³Ramsey, Michael, Image Old And New, London, 1963, p. 7; Robinson, J.A.T., "The Debate Continues," p. 270.

³⁴Richardson, Alan, History Sacred And Profane, London, 1964, pp. 81-82, footnote 3; "God: Our Search Or His?" Four Anchors From The Stern, pp. 12-13.

anti-mystical theology of A. Ritschl, it has had a long history. As we showed in the last chapter, it began with the reaction of the Aufklärung against its contemporary, Pietism, and with the anti-mystical character of Kant's epistemology. In this sense Barth and Bonhoeffer stand with the Aufklärung which, in Kant's phrase, represented man's emergence from minority, i.e. his coming of age. In this anti-mystical, anti-Pietistic position Barth and Bonhoeffer share. This is to say that in denouncing "religion" they are thinking of it in terms of some of its Pietistic characteristics. The peculiar kind of inwardness, of individualism, of other-worldly quietism of German Pietism, we described in detail in the chapter on Philip Spener.³⁵

It is also clear that the term religion is very ambiguous and must be handled with considerable caution. When Barth speaks of the "Abolition Of Religion" and Bonhoeffer of "religionless" man, neither means "God's search for man" as Professor Richardson has it. Both mean by "religion" a purely human endeavor which must be rooted out and cast away so that God in Christ can come to man.

³⁵ This contention that the term religion had Pietistic connotations for Bonhoeffer is supported by his reference in Outline For A Book to "Pietism as the last attempt to maintain evangelical Christianity as a religion." Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 164, underlining mine. There is a strong anti-Pietistic strain running through all Bonhoeffer's works, particularly The Cost Of Discipleship, Life Together, and Ethics. To look briefly at the least known of these, Life Together: Bonhoeffer could speak of the Christian shut up in his spirituality and piety (p.25), forever feeling his pulse or taking his temperature (p. 30); he could warn the Church against becoming a collegium pietatis (p. 37) where there is so often "morbidly in meditation" and too much "self-centered introspection" (p. 84), Gemeinsames Leben, E.T. Life Together, by Doberstein, J.W., New York, 1954. Richmond feels that this presupposition about the meaning of "religion" raises serious doubts concerning the value of Barth's and Bonhoeffer's doctrine of man for the solution of contemporary theological problems. Richmond, p. 39.

Having described the world come of age and religionless man, and before disclosing his own answer to the challenge they present, Bonhoeffer spoke of two important failures in addressing this world and the man who inhabits it. The Churches have responded by renewing their efforts to provide the "tutelage" religion has always supplied, and the Dialectical theology has responded with an "Offenbarungspositivismus."

The Churches have tended to see in the world come of age a "great defection from God" and have tried to oppose it. The more they have done so the more modern man has come to consider himself anti-Christian. Many churchmen have asked if there is any room left for God and being unsure of the answer they have condemned the whole development by which man has come of age.³⁶

Ronald Gregor Smith has amplified this hurriedly sketched idea of Bonhoeffer's in this way. Religion seeks to understand and explain human life in terms of its gospel which offers men consolation and assurance. In accepting these gifts the world must accept the Church as the purveyor of them. As a result, the perennial temptation of the Church is to use its message as an instrument of power. Since the end of the middle ages, it has attempted to build a new structure of authority out of the fragments of the old to replace the broken tradition of the medieval Church. With man's coming of age, the Church has been hard pressed to preserve its message and with the message to preserve itself.

There have been a whole series of retreats all along the line. The Church has been all too ready to fight a battle against the world on behalf

³⁶Letters And Papers From Prison, pp. 121, 107.

of God. Many well-meaning churchmen have tried to "rescue" God from the advance of modern knowledge. As one position after another has fallen to modern man's advance in science and knowledge, God has been rescued and drawn back to the frontiers of human life.³⁷

The Church has been on the defensive ever against the world come of age. It has viewed this coming of age as a repudiation of God and as a denial of the Church's right to exist. Instead of accepting the fact that the world has come of age, the Church has sought to halt this development, sometimes by rather questionable practices. The world reacts to these attempts at self-justification by turning its back on the Church and with the anti-ecclesiastical and anti-clerical resentment which is commonplace in many quarters of the modern world.³⁸

The Church has tried to prove to the world come of age that it cannot live without the "tutelage of God," so that the Church, as the "purveyor" of God might retain a place in modern life. But the Church has no authorization from its Lord for any kind of domination or "overlordship" where the world is involved. It is called to serve not to dominate.³⁹

When the Church seeks to govern and control the world with some lever of power, its ecclesiastical ambitions are not true to its Lord. It seeks to assert its authority by not permitting a world come of age to be itself. The world is deeply suspicious of the unrestrained ambitions of the Church over the world, for it has had a long and unhappy experience with them.⁴⁰

³⁷Smith, pp. 54-55, 98-100.

³⁸Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 164; Minthe, pp. 24, 29.

³⁹Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 107; Ethics, pp. 264-265; Minthe, p.33.

⁴⁰Smith, pp. 56-58, 68-69.

During these years the Church has fought for self-preservation as though it were an end in itself, and has thereby lost its chance to speak a word of reconciliation to mankind and the world at large.⁴¹

The Church has lost its chance to speak because it has failed to become involved in the problems and the issues the contemporary world faces. It has been too busy defending its own "territory." In fighting for its own interests, it has failed to be God's Church in and for the world.⁴²

The theology of the Church has tried to construct an apologetic to meet the reality of the world come of age. Some times it has fought "futile rear-guard actions" against the advance in human knowledge, e.g. against Darwinism. More often, Bonhoeffer wrote, it has "accommodated" itself to a world apparently getting along quite well without God by beating retreat, by surrendering whole areas at the center of human life to the science and technology of modern man and by "restricting" the sphere of God's activity to the "so-called last questions as a kind of deus ex machina."

Religious people speak of God when human perception is at an end, or human resources fail: it is in fact always the deus ex machina they call to their aid, either for the so-called solving of insoluble problems or as support in human failure, always, that is to say, helping out human weakness or on the borders of human existence.⁴³

⁴¹Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 160.

⁴²Ethics, pp. 68-69; Minthe, p. 36.

⁴³Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 93; also pp. 114-115.

This is a double failure. First, it fails because it is an "accommodation." It permits the center of life to be lost to God in exchange for the "boundary-situations" as His undisputed province. But this is in itself retreat and it is self-defeating. For, second, this truce will last only until man come of age can push the boundary back still further, until ultimately a point of no return is reached and God becomes superfluous not only at the center of life, but as a deus ex machina as well.⁴⁴

When the Church accepts this settlement of the matter it is as if it agreed with the world's judgment that God "no longer connects with anything in most people's life, except with whatever happens to be left over when all the vital connections have been made."⁴⁵ It is, as R.G. Smith has put it, to relegate God to the wings of the theater when the drama of human life is being played out on the center of the stage.⁴⁶

It is equally wrong to use God as a "stopgap" (Lückenbüsser) for the incompleteness of human knowledge, for the same reason. The frontiers of knowledge are being pushed back further and further. As a "stopgap" God is in more or less continuous retreat. The day may soon come when the concept of God is no longer required to "guarantee" anything or to "solve" anything. This is the great danger in this procedure. Instead we should find God in the center of our knowledge and not only where our knowledge runs out.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 93; also pp. 114-115.

⁴⁵Pelz, p. 229.

⁴⁶Smith, p. 67; see Berger, "Camus, Bonhoeffer And The World Come Of Age," II, p. 450.

⁴⁷Letters And Papers From Prison, pp. 103-104; Marty, Martin E., "Bonhoeffer: Seminarian's Theologian," The Christian Century, April 20, 1960, p. 468; Robinson, Honest To God, p. 37.

Above all the Church is wrong when it accommodates itself to a world come of age by concentrating on the "boundary-situations" of human life, the so-called "ultimate questions," and thereby on the area of personal religion, of private faith. In the first instance, that of the boundary-situations of anxiety, guilt, death, men are by no means so preoccupied with them as the Church would like to believe. In addition, these questions can no longer be answered by the Church alone, and while they may still exist as "ultimate questions" today, what if one day they are no longer unanswerable without God?⁴⁸

In the second instance, it is thought that man can be addressed only when his weaknesses as sinner are pointed out, and attention focuses on man's inmost, most intimate, most personal, private, secret life. Since every man does still have such a private quarter in his life, it was thought he would be most vulnerable at this point. Here God is to have His domain. But the Bible does not recognize the inner life of man as God's special domain. This is never less than the whole man.

This is why I am so anxious that God should not be relegated to some last secret place, but that we should frankly recognize that the world and men have come of age, that we should not speak ill of man in his worldliness, but confront him with God at his strongest point...⁴⁹

Let the Church beware the "last secret place," the private world of "the individual's need,"⁵⁰ the sphere of the "bad conscience" or the "sin-sick

⁴⁸Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 107; Minthe, pp. 24, 29.

⁴⁹Letters And Papers From Prison, pp. 116-118.

⁵⁰Robinson, Honest To God, p. 38.

soul."⁵¹ The Church must never confine itself to the so-called "religious" functions of man, but must concern itself with the whole man in all of his relationships.⁵²

Bonhoeffer's major thesis is unmistakable, the Church has proceeded on the assumption that man's extremity was the occasion for God's working. Christianity was something that delivered from weakness, guilt, despair, pain, and death. Where men suffered, where they were destitute, unforgiven, there religion "saved" and "redeemed" them. The gospel addressed itself to men where they despaired over their impotence and were anxious about their salvation. But this whole scheme is self-defeating, Bonhoeffer contended, because it presupposes that helplessness is an "eradicable mark" of human nature and that man will turn to God in his need. Instead man come of age has become increasingly self-reliant, seems to be getting on very well without God, and simply cannot be counted upon to rely on God.

Man come of age has become more and more self-sufficient and generally no longer acknowledges his dependence on a divine being. He is neither particularly aware of his helplessness nor is he anxious about his salvation. Bonhoeffer contended that he has really been liberated from religion and its concerns. Freed from the burden of guilt and without a feeling of absolute dependence, modern man exercises the tremendous power his science and technology have put into his hands. He has come of age. He is "religionless" man.⁵³

⁵¹Marty, "Problems And Possibilities In Bonhoeffer's Thought," p. 17.

⁵²Ethics, p. 21.

⁵³Ebersole, pp. 55-63, 71-73, 77, 180; Jenkins, "Religion And Coming Of Age," pp. 212-213; Berger, "Camus, Bonhoeffer And The World Come Of Age," II p. 450.

Where the Church accepts the restriction of God's activity to the religious quarter of human life, it means that where men do not feel any sense of need for God, they must be "pounced" upon in their weakest moments and shown that in actual fact they have problems, needs, conflicts. Where men have none of these difficulties and cannot be brought to have any of them, they simply cannot be won for God.

if a man won't see that his happiness is really damnation, his health sickness, his vigor and vitality despair; if he won't call them what they really are, the theologian is at his wits' end. He must be a hardened sinner of a particularly vicious type. If not, he is a case of bourgeois complacency, and the one is as far from salvation as the other.⁵⁴

Did not Jesus use distress as His point of contact with men? It is true our Lord took the dregs of human society to Himself, but He did not first convince men of their sinfulness before He dealt with them. He did not throw doubt on man's health or strength. He claimed the whole of human life for Himself. On the contrary, some clergymen have rummaged about in the sordid side of men's lives in order to be able to point out their need for forgiveness and for God.⁵⁵

Some clergymen have assumed that healthy men must first be made sick and wretched so as to have a need for the "medicine" of religion. Even today man come of age is to be taken by the throat and shaken into a state of helplessness and despair in order to order that he may wish to hear the Word

⁵⁴Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 115.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 91, 110, 114-117.

of God.⁵⁶ Some clergymen bully men by inflating their feelings of guilt, by making them feel "shabby, mean, and contemptible," for if they feel guilty enough, they will come to religion in their "need."⁵⁷

Bonhoeffer might have quoted Nietzsche in his teaching that Christianity exists to lighten the heart, but it must first make the heart heavy in order to lighten it. This conception of God predicated on His rescuing man from his impotence is a serious mistake. It makes the existence of God dependent on the impotence and ignorance of man, and modern man is impotent and ignorant no longer. So taught Nietzsche. Christianity denies man and the world in order to give the glory to God. It denies the "diesseits" in order to affirm the "jenseits." However, the modern world belongs to the diesseits and modern science has destroyed the jenseits. Christianity belongs nowhere any longer.⁵⁸

In a famous passage, Bonhoeffer described the attempt by some of the clergy to create a "need" for God in man in this way,

The attack by Christian apologetic upon the adulthood of the world I consider to be in the first place pointless, in the second ignoble, and in the third un-Christian. Pointless, because it looks to me like an attempt to put a grown-up man back into adolescence, i.e. to make him dependent on things on which he is not in fact

⁵⁶Ebersole, pp. 55, 61-62; Harrelson, Walter, "Bonhoeffer And The Bible," The Place Of Bonhoeffer, p. 136; Berger, "Camus, Bonhoeffer And The World Come Of Age," II, p. 450.

⁵⁷Williams, H.A., "Psychological Objections," Objections To Christian Belief, London, 1963.

⁵⁸Hazelton, Roger, "Was Nietzsche An Anti-Christian?" Journal Of Religion, Vol. XXII, No. 1, January 1942, pp. 67-68, 79.

dependent any more, thrusting him back into the midst of problems which are in fact not problems for him any more. Ignoble, because this amounts to an effort to exploit the weakness of man for purposes alien to him and not freely subscribed to by him. Un-Christian, because for Christ himself is being substituted one particular stage in the religiousness of man, i.e. a human law.⁵⁹

As Ronald Gregor Smith has it, the Church is not called to be the "governess of a child under age" or "the warder of a condemned world." This would be to deny the real independence of man and his responsibility for his own destiny. While some men may find an escape from the tensions of the present by such a retreat into an authoritarian Church, most men want to affirm the freedom of the human spirit.⁶⁰

In this context Bonhoeffer reserved some of his most caustic criticism for what he called "the secularized off-shoots of Christian theology," the existentialist philosophers and the psychotherapists. These try to show "secure, contented, happy mankind that it is really unhappy and desperate," from which condition they alone can rescue it. They seek to drive men to "inward despair," for then they play into their hands. Men's intimate lives have become their "hunting ground," and in this they resemble the "dirtiest gutter journalists." It is not social or political blackmail they practise, but "religious" blackmail. The clergy ought not to become their allies, or

⁵⁹Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 108.

⁶⁰Smith, pp. 67, 73-74; Edwards, David L., "A New Stirring In English Christianity," The Honest To God Debate, p. 42.

to regard psychotherapy and existentialism as "precursors of God."⁶¹

Instead let the Church turn its people away from their own needs, problems, sins, and fears, to metanoia. It is nothing less than a "curtailment" of the gospel, if Jesus Christ is proclaimed as near only to what is broken and evil.⁶² In fact Christianity does not even have the sole answers to the problems of guilt, suffering, death. It is possible to find answers to these which do not contain God in any way. Bonhoeffer said that we are not to speak of God on the boundaries of life but at its center, in life and not only in death, in health and not only in suffering, in prosperity and not only in sin and weakness. Christ is the "center of life." He did not simply come to answer man's unsolved problems.⁶³ Christianity rightly understood is not essentially a religion at all, if by this is meant introducing God to answer men's questions on the boundaries of human existence. Instead Christ's Lordship must be proclaimed over the whole world.⁶⁴

R. Prenter writes, the God who stands on the boundaries of human existence, where human might runs out into powerlessness, is an idol. The true God stands, like the tree of life in paradise, in the center of the world. He is not to be found on the boundaries where the "religious" seek

⁶¹Letters And Papers From Prison, pp. 107-108, 115-118. Richmond feels this attack on psychotherapy has caused Bonhoeffer's followers a great deal of embarrassment, p. 38. While Bonhoeffer's criticism is overdrawn, the element of truth in it is this: many psychotherapists, whether intentionally or not, establish counseling relationships which increase rather than decrease the dependency of their patients.

⁶²Ibid., p. 123; Ethics, p. 100.

⁶³Letters And Papers From Prison, pp. 93, 104.

⁶⁴Wentz, Frederick K., "Lay Renaissance: Europe And America," The Christian Century, May 13, 1959, p. 576.

Him, but in the center of normal life. He stands in the center of "natural" life, of health and labor, in the center of the "diesseitigen" world.⁶⁵

At some length, this is Bonhoeffer's searching criticism of a Church which seeks to maintain its "tutelage" of the world. The second failure in addressing die mündige Welt, Bonhoeffer called Offenbarungspositivismus.

Bonhoeffer was always quick to praise Barth for his attack upon "religion." However he had not carried his work to its logical conclusion, his disciple objected. He had stopped short of showing how Christ could become the Lord even of those with no religion.

he gave no concrete guidance, either in dogmatics or in ethics, on the non-religious interpretation of theological concepts. There lies his limitation, and because of it his theology of revelation becomes positivist, a "positivism of revelation," as I put it.⁶⁶

In going no further he has in effect deserted the world, leaving it to its own devices. He has left the world to either accept or reject the message of revelation.⁶⁷ Wherever this criticism of Barth appears in Letters And Papers From Prison, it stands in close relationship to Bonhoeffer's discussion of religionless Christianity.⁶⁸

Barth has expressed his doubts about this reproach,

Now he (Bonhoeffer) has left us with the enigmatic ut-

⁶⁵Prenter, Regin, "Bonhoeffer und der junge Luther," Die mündige Welt, Band IV, München, 1963, pp. 42, 45.

⁶⁶Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 109.

⁶⁷Ebersole, pp. 63-64; Vidler, A.R., "Religion And The National Church," Soundings, p. 244.

⁶⁸Prenter, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer und Karl Barths Offenbarungspositivismus," p. 11.

terances of his letters, in more than one place it is clearly betrayed that he had a presentiment but did not know at all how the story should continue, e.g. his criticism of my 'Positivism of Revelation' and how a program of non-religious speech should progress.⁶⁹

One is certainly entitled to ask why the striking term, "positivism," is used in this context. Bonhoeffer apparently meant that if there is no "religious" point of contact for the divine revelation in man, and no attempt is made at a "non-religious interpretation" of Biblical concepts, the statements of faith are irrelevant, totally unrelated to modern man. They may then only be accepted or rejected as "givens" (posita) without any further basis.⁷⁰

Barth was the first theologian to begin the criticism of religion, and that remains his really great merit, but he set in its place the positivist doctrine of revelation which says in effect, 'Take it or leave it: ' Virgin Birth, Trinity, or anything else, everything which is an equally significant and necessary part of the whole, which latter has to be swallowed as a whole or not at all...The positivist doctrine of revelation makes it too easy for itself...but the world is made to depend upon itself and left to its own devices, and that is all wrong.'⁷¹

⁶⁹Letter to P.W. Herrenbrück, Die mündige Welt, I, p. 121.

⁷⁰Prenter, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer und Karl Barths Offenbarungspositivismus," p.13

⁷¹Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 95.

The one persistent question which cannot be brushed aside is,

How can Christ become the Lord even of those with no religion?...Barth who is the only one to have started on this line of thought, has still not proceeded to its logical solution, but has arrived at a positivism of revelation which has nevertheless remained essentially a restoration. For the religionless working man, or indeed, man generally, nothing that makes any real difference is gained by that.⁷²

Barth has turned his back on religion, and in this he is right. However, Barth's contention that God can never be an "object" of religious innerness, and therefore a part of the world, this position dare not be turned into a "worldless" doctrine of revelation. For God in Christ is Lord of the world, as its Creator and Redeemer.⁷³ A "worldless" doctrine of revelation leaves the world to itself. It is without relation or relevance to the life of man in the world today.

What Bonhoeffer sought, which he missed in Barth, was a religionless interpretation of theological concepts. This would place God over against the world as its Lord. The Lordship of God over the world makes impossible any irrelevance of revelation to the world. It is a Lordship which does not arrest the "maturity" of the world but confirms it. Bonhoeffer sought a religionless form of expression in which the revelation of God could be

⁷²Letters And Papers From Prison, pp.91-92.

⁷³Prenter, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer und Karl Barths Offenbarungspositivismus," pp. 14-15.

proclaimed to the world come of age.⁷⁴

This does not mean that theological concepts must somehow be translated in order to be understood today. This is what the existentialist theologians have tried to do, in the case of Bultmann, by the old liberal reduction process.⁷⁵ The concepts of Creation, Fall, Redemption, Repentance, Faith, the New Life, the Last Things all have their meaning, without translation. What must happen is that they must be proclaimed as God's "being-for" the world, and not in such a way as to save man out of the world into some kind of religious inwardness.⁷⁶

Bonhoeffer wished to guard the teachings of the faith from "profanation."⁷⁷ By profanation he meant Offenbarungspositivismus, where the truths of revelation are presented to the world for reception without their relationship to life in the world come of age having been demonstrated. Where this occurs, the "being-for" the world of God and the gospel is marred and this is their "profanation." They can be protected from this profanation only through an "Arkandisziplin" undertaken as an act of repentance by a Church which has lived for itself rather than for the world.

As early as his inaugural dissertation of 1931,⁷⁸ Bonhoeffer was critical of certain features of the transcendentalism of Barth, emphasizing rather the fundamental theme of all his work, what E. Bethge has called

⁷⁴Prenter, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer und Karl Barths Offenbarungspositivismus," pp. 15-16.

⁷⁵Letters And Papers From Prison, pp. 94, 110.

⁷⁶Prenter, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer und Karl Barths Offenbarungspositivismus," pp. 17-18.

⁷⁷Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 95.

⁷⁸Akt und Sein, E. T. Act And Being, by Noble, B., New York, 1961.

"the concreteness of revelation."⁷⁹ When other Dialectical theologians saw the sovereignty of revelation preserved in its freedom and intangibility, Bonhoeffer contended that God was free in having bound Himself in His Word, free in His self-disclosure. He taught that God is "haversable" and "tangible" in His Word. What he was concerned to preserve, in the face of transcendentalism, was the possibility of God's facing man as a Person in time, and the possibility of a suffering God's "being-for" man in the world.⁸⁰

The time when men could be told everything by means of words, whether theological or simply pious, is over...⁸¹

Not even a theology of revelation will make much impact on a world come of age. What is needed is a Church which will participate in the being of Christ in the world.⁸²

Gustaf Wingren makes the same criticism from a somewhat different point of view. He criticizes Barth for making the question of man's knowledge of God the central question in theology. Wingren regards his position as a concession on the part of Barth to modern, atheistic, religion-

⁷⁹Bethge, pp. 15, 20.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 20; Prenter, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer und Karl Barths Offenbarungspositivismus," pp. 19-21, 35-37. There is no crude Offenbarungspositivismus in Barth. He is no Gnostic, as Prenter points out. Still the criticism comes home and when it is made, it must be remembered how good a Barthian Bonhoeffer himself was. In this context we are reminded of the comment in Bonhoeffer's Outline For A Book:

Barth and the Confessing Church have encouraged us to entrench ourselves behind the "faith of the Church," and evade the honest question, what is our real and personal belief. Hence lack of fresh air, even in the Confessing Church. To say, 'It's the Church's faith, not mine,' can be a clericalist subterfuge, and outsiders always regard it as such. Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 165.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 91.

⁸²Godsey, pp. 276-277.

less man for whom the question of knowledge is the one essential question whenever God is discussed. Positivism of revelation! The Biblical contention that God is present and active in His Word and deals with men through it, he believes weakened in Barth's presentation. The emphasis is on knowledge. Faith apprehends God and receives knowledge of Him, a knowledge which was previously lacking in man's life.⁸³

In Act And Being Bonhoeffer was critical of Barth for contending, in essence, that God is, in that He gives Himself to men to know, and faith is the obedient acceptance of this revelation of God. Bonhoeffer was concerned about God "being-for" man, and also the possibility of man "being in" Christ, in a way he felt this transcendentalism made impossible. Bonhoeffer believed that this position of Barth's was far removed from any passion for the diesseitige world. Thus he taught an Arkandisziplin in order to protect the mysteries of God from this "profanation."⁸⁴

In this way and to this degree, Barth and Bonhoeffer part company. Both men want to preserve the truths of revelation and to free the gospel from religion. With Barth this is accomplished by rooting everything in eternity, in God's eternal decree. Bonhoeffer's concern leads in the opposite direction. He was concerned with Christ's "being-for" the world and man's "being in" Christ in a way that cannot be made identical with knowledge. In this context one can see that Bonhoeffer could understand

⁸³Wingren, Gustaf, Theology In Conflict, E.T. by Wahlstrom, E.H., Edinburgh, 1958, pp. 38, 110, 115, 123.

⁸⁴Prenter, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer und Karl Barths Offenbarungspositivismus," pp. 37-39. Prenter asks whether Barth can avoid the charge of "positivism," in the sense in which Bonhoeffer made it, so long as he denies the possibility of any natural consciousness of God.

the "cognitive" meaning Barth gives to revelation as a Positivism of Revelation.⁸⁵

RELIGIONLESS CHRISTIANITY

Having established the need for a new kind of approach of the gospel to a world come of age, and having subjected the two most common contemporary approaches, the "tutelage" of religion and the "Offenbarungspositivismus" of the Dialectical theology, to criticism, Bonhoeffer framed his own answer under the theme: "religionless Christianity."

The pivotal question is: "How can Christ become the Lord even of those with no religion?" What is the significance of the Church, of preaching, of the Christian life in a religionless world? "How do we speak of God without religion...in a secular fashion?" How can the Christian be "religionless," how can he be a Christian in "a secular sense?" "How can we reclaim for Christ a world which has come of age?"¹

The only way is through metanoia, through "ultimate honesty." The Christian must live in the world, "etsi deus non daretur," before God! God is teaching Christians to live as men who can get along perfectly well without Him. The God who will not permit us to use Him as a deus ex machina is "the God before whom we are ever standing." "Before God and with Him we live without God."² The question, is it possible for Christianity to take

⁸⁵Prenter, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer und Karl Barths Offenbarungspositivismus," pp. 39-41.

¹Letters And Papers From Prison, pp. 91-92, 115.

²Ibid., pp. 121-122.

seriously the Prometheanism of modern man and still proclaim its gospel, Bonhoeffer could only answer affirmatively. Christ must be proclaimed as at the center of life, however, where a religious quarter as a special point of contact with men come of age can no longer be presupposed.³

The Pauline question whether circumcision is a condition of justification is to-day...the question whether religion is a condition of salvation. Freedom from circumcision is at the same time freedom from religion.⁴

The "religious premise" stands between the gospel and man come of age today just as the law once stood between the gospel and the Jewish people. The Christian faith must be made independent of the religious activities with which it has always been associated. Christianity must become altogether "this-worldly" and resist any restriction of it to the sphere of individual or personal response.⁵

In this context Bonhoeffer spoke of a "hopeful godlessness" or "promising godlessness" which protests against "pious godlessness," against religion, and against the Church. Such a protest, as a genuine faith in God, may find it necessary to leave the Church. In the same vein, Bonhoeffer could speak of often feeling more at ease with the religionless than with

³Ebersele, p. 60; Robinson, "The Debate Continues," p. 271. Critics have questioned this use of terminology. J. Lawrence has written, "'religionless Christianity' is an illuminating phrase but it represents an abstraction, like the square-root of minus two, which one will never meet in flesh and blood." The Honest To God Debate, p. 162. W. Harrelson contends that a non-religious or secular interpretation of Biblical terms and categories would simply become another religion, a "non-religious" religion, simply one more interpretation of the Biblical meaning along side other interpretations, p. 138.

⁴Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 92.

⁵Robinson, Honest To God, p. 124; Jenkins, Beyond Religion, p. 9; Minthe, p.21.

the religious and of finding it more natural to speak of God with them.

"Now that it has come of age, the world is more godless, and perhaps it is for that very reason nearer to God than ever before." The "worldliness" of Christianity requires that the Christian be, not a "homo religiosus," but a man, "pure and simple," as his Lord was a man.⁶

The essence of religion is its division of life into two spheres: "the one divine, holy supernatural, and Christian, and the other worldly, profane, natural, and un-Christian." But this creates the possibility of existence in the one apart from the other, and herein the difficulty lies. As long as the sacred and the secular, Christ and the world, are divided in this way, a man is faced with the dilemma:

he seeks Christ without the world, or he seeks the world
without Christ. In either case he is deceiving himself.⁷

Being religious or being Christian is undertaken at the expense of the world. It is otherworldly. Whenever life in the secular realm becomes difficult or painful, the religious man withdraws into the sacred. He can ignore the secular or despise it, from the vantage point of his religious refuge. The secular remains that "other" sphere, irrelevant to a man's personal salvation, nothing more than the "proving ground" of man's eternal soul.⁸

⁶Ethics, pp. 39-40; Letters And Papers From Prison, pp. 92-93, 124. In this context he wrote that his "suspicion and horror of religiosity are greater than ever. I often think of how the Israelites never uttered the name of God" Ibid., p. 44. Later he remarked about how little he missed going to Church. Ibid., p. 54.

⁷Ethics, pp. 62-63; Berger, "Camus, Bonhoeffer And The World Come of Age," II, pp. 450-451.

⁸Bethge, pp. 22-23; Minthe, pp. 37-38.

In this way the concept of the natural has fallen into "discredit," and this has meant the Church has been incapable of dealing with the practical questions of natural life. It has left modern people unassisted in the many important decisions of their daily lives in the world, while confining its energies to providing an apology for divine grace.⁹

The sacred and the secular, God and the world, are reconciled in Christ. Where this is understood, it is no longer possible to speak of God without the world or the world without God. The Lord is the Lord of both kingdoms. The secular is taken up into God, and henceforth

that which is Christian is to be found only in that which is of the world, the 'supernatural' only in the natural, the holy only in the profane, and the revelational only in the rational.¹⁰

This has happened by the incarnation of Christ, and this is what Christians are to make known by their words and their lives. The sacred and the secular have been reconciled. In the incarnation life finds unity again and a "genuine worldliness" becomes possible and necessary for the Christian.¹¹

This new understanding of the world and God is one of the keys to Bonhoeffer's thought. In his "Christological" understanding, Christ's sovereignty embraces the whole world. His dominion is all-inclusive. Christ is "deprovincialized," in E. Minthe's phrase.¹²

As a result the Church is not called to Christianize the secular or to

⁹Ethics, pp. 101-102.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 65; also pp. 8, 32, 63-64.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 72, 191, 263.

¹²Minthe, p. 19.

subordinate it to itself or in some way to an "alien," clerical rule. The secular is under the dominion of Christ precisely in its "genuine worldliness." Under this dominion alone, the secular attains its true character.¹³

Following the incarnation, the Christian is called to live his Christian life in his secular calling in his day to day life. This was the meaning of Luther's return from the monastery to the world. He had concluded that the "otherworldliness" of the Christian life ought to be manifested in the very midst of the world. Now the Christian was to take up his position "against the world in the world."¹⁴ The incarnation of Christ has torn down the walls men erect between the sacred and the secular. Luther clearly understood that the Christian life was not to be lived according to the "self-chosen" ascetic practices of monastic life, but in daily life in one's calling in service to one's neighbor.¹⁵ The Christian belongs, not protected from the secular in the seclusion of a cloistered life, but in "the thick of foes," participating in the encounter of Christ with the world. As we have noted,

the corpus christianum is broken asunder. The corpus Christi confronts a hostile world. The world has known Christ and has turned its back on Him, and it is to this world that the Church must now prove that Christ is the

¹³ Ethics, pp. 291-294, 325. In coming to this position Bonhoeffer repudiated two traditional views: the first, that of Kulturprotestantismus, of the continuum of Christ and culture; the second, that of the Pietists who viewed the relationship as one in which the Church was a walled fortress set in the midst of hostile territory. Littell, Franklin, "Bonhoeffer's History, Church, And World," The Place Of Bonhoeffer, pp. 328-329.

¹⁴ The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 238-239; Ethics, pp. 223-224.

¹⁵ Prenter, Regin, "Luther's Theology Of The Cross," Lutheran World, Vol. VI, No. 3, December 1959, p. 230.

living Lord.¹⁶

It is precisely here in connection with his thought about the sacred and the secular that Bonhoeffer's teaching about an Arkandisziplin belongs.¹⁷ There is a close relationship between his theology of the world come of age and the arcane discipline. The latter is no retreat from the secular into a new kind of religious inwardness. It is a humble, secret devotion of service to the world for which Christ died. It is an identification with the world and a suffering with it in all its tribulations. It is a secret discipline of sacrifice and service which persistently sends the believer back into the world.¹⁸

We have already noted that E. Bethge has framed "the concreteness of revelation" as the theme of all of Bonhoeffer's work. J. Doberstein has spoken of an "insistent realism" characterizing everything he wrote, turning away from the "phraseological" to the "real" as Bonhoeffer himself said.¹⁹ His conception of an arcane discipline belongs to this whole complex of thought. In several places in the Letters And Papers From Prison this conception of an arcane discipline is closely linked to his criticism of Offenbarungspositivismus.

a secret discipline must be re-established whereby the mysteries of the Christian faith are preserved from profanation.²⁰

¹⁶Ethics, p. 44; also pp. 91; Life Together, p. 17.

¹⁷This demonstrates the continuity between the later Ethics and the earlier The Cost Of Discipleship, respectively.

¹⁸Smith, pp. 103-107.

¹⁹Doberstein, J., Translator's Introduction, Life Together, p. 8.

²⁰Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 95, see also p. 92.

Positivism of Revelation he considered to be a "profanation" which obscures the meaning of the "mysteries of the Christian faith" which is God's and the Church's "being-for" the world. An arcane discipline protects from this profanation because it conveys this "being-for" the world in actual practice. The arcane discipline is really being there for the world in secular life in example and service. This discipline of the Church is also to be understood as an act of repentance. A Church which has squandered its strength hollowing out a quartier religieux for itself in contemporary life and which has been off "for itself and against the world instead of for the world and against itself" must undertake the arcane discipline as an act of repentance. In this way Bonhoeffer set his own passion for the diesseitige world over against what he called the Offenbarungspositivismus of Barth.²¹

Bonhoeffer sought to go a step further than Barth. He began with the latter's insistence that revelation never be removed from the sphere of God's freedom into that of man's control, a view which emphasized the sovereignty and freedom of revelation. The further step he took was to ask that this sovereignty be preserved precisely in its self-disclosure. E. Bethge

²¹Prenter, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer und Karl Barths Offenbarungspositivismus," pp. 18-20, 37-38. W. Harrelson strenuously objects to this:

Bonhoeffer wants to find a way to present Christian faith by means of non-religious equivalents of such terms as repentance, faith, justification, rebirth, sanctification. But he also wants the Church to live a secret life in which the mystery of Word and Sacrament is secured from profanation. The Church, on this view, lives two lives, one public and the other private. This dualism is far more dangerous, in my view, than the 'positivism of revelation' of Barth or the...(views) of Bultmann. P. 136.

has written that "quite after Lutheran fashion" Bonhoeffer reasserted the finitum capax infiniti. He did so because of his concern for the "concreteness" of revelation in the word and life of the Church.²² With fidelity to Barth he sought here to bridge this historic difference between Calvinism and Lutheranism.²³

In Barth's theology God is not conceived as working in anything human or as using the human as an instrument in any way. God's actions may occur "with," but never "in and under," human action.²⁴ On the other hand, the finitum capax infiniti may be considered to be the heart of Bonhoeffer's thought.²⁵ Here as everywhere he was concerned to preserve God's "being-for" man in the world.

When we turn to ask about the character of the arcane discipline, we learn it is a discipleship to which Christ calls the believer. It is not a way of one's own choosing; it is not a "programme" for one's life. It is obedience to the call of Jesus, an "exclusive attachment to His person." Christianity is not simply doctrine or religious experience, but discipleship, "responsible, obedient action" in all the situations of everyday life.²⁶

²²Bethge, pp. 15, 20.

²³Marty, Martin, "Problems And Possibilities In Bonhoeffer's Thought," p. 13.

²⁴Wingren, Theology In Conflict, pp. 33-34, 123-124; quoting Barth, Church Dogmatics, III/4 here.

²⁵See Bethge, pp. 15, 21; Marty, "Problems And Possibilities In Bonhoeffer's Thought," p. 13; Sherman, F., "Act And Being," The Place Of Bonhoeffer, p. 105.

²⁶The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 49-56, 84-85. The entire work deals with this topic. For a discussion of the life of discipleship in capsule form, see the exposition of the Beatitudes, pp. 95-104. His polemic in this work against "cheap grace" and his emphasis on obedience might have seemed to turn grace into a new law. For Barth's expression of "concern" see his letter to Bonhoeffer of 14 Oktober, 1936, Die mündige Welt, Band I, pp. 118-121; and for Bonhoeffer's self-criticism, Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 125. See also Codsey, p. 268.

The disciple is not above his Master, and his Master

allows himself to be edged out of the world and on to the cross. God is weak and powerless in the world, and that is exactly the way, the only way, in which he can be with us and help us...it is not by his omnipotence that Christ helps us, but by his weakness and suffering.²⁷

While man's religiosity makes him look to the power of God to fill his needs as a deus ex machina, the Scripture points him to the "powerlessness and suffering of God." The God thus revealed conquers "power and space" in the world precisely in His suffering.²⁸ In leaving the world without a God who meets its needs from out of His omnipotence, God comes to the world in His weakness and suffering. This God of the Bible cannot be used or manipulated. This God does not assert His authority over the secular as the medieval corpus christianum did: His lordship is that of the crucified. His lordship is that of His assumption of the guilt of the world.²⁹

The "religious" then use a false conception of God as a deus ex machina. Theirs is a God of might who gives might over the world into men's hands for the filling of their needs and the solving of their problems. The true God is not to be found in these boundary-situations, but hangs crucified on the tree of life "in the middle of the garden." Religionless Christianity means to live without the false God who puts power into men's hands. This God is an idol. The true God does not help men "with might within a domain of might," but gives Himself to them in worldly weakness

²⁷Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 122.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ebersole, pp. 74-75; Minthe, p. 19.

as the loving God. The Church which follows Him is the Church under the cross.³⁰

The parallel here to Luther's theologia crucis is striking. By theologia crucis Luther meant God's grace under His wrath, life under death, His opus proprium under His opus alienum. In this theology the almighty God is "hidden in suffering," His majesty hidden under the shame of the crucifixion. In the same way the Christian life is hidden under the cross, not in a self-chosen cross, but in that one which God sends a man in the trials and temptations of his life.³¹

When Bonhoeffer spoke of God's relationship to the world come of age, he called it God's "being-for" (Fürsein) the world. This "being-for" is the suffering of God in the world. The Christian belongs to this relationship in his "being-for" the world, in his suffering for others in worldly life. This is precisely the opposite of "religion" which seeks to "save" man out of the world into some kind of religious inwardness.³²

The transcendence of our Lord is to be found in "the concern of Jesus for others." It is not something infinitely remote, but consists "in the nearest task at hand."³³ The living Christ is present in person in the

³⁰Prenter, "Bonhoeffer und der junge Luther," pp. 40-42, 45. A. MacIntyre believes that this ethic belonged to the Church under National Socialism, when the role of suffering witness was the only one open to it, but that it has nothing to say to the problems of the welfare state, the handling of power, the patterns of world revolution of today. "God And The Theologians," The Honest To God Debate, pp. 220-222.

³¹See the chapter on Luther, and here Prenter, "Luther's Theology Of The Cross," pp. 222-223.

³²Prenter, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer und Karl Barths Offenbarungspositivismus," pp. 16-18.

³³Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 165.

midst of life. He is present in the Word and the Sacraments and in the Congregation. One can speak of the "concreteness of revelation" as E. Bethge does or of the "corporalizing of the gospel" with R. Prenter.³⁴ Through this sharing in the body of Christ, the congregation itself becomes the body of Christ in the world. In this way as Word, Sacrament, and Congregation, Christ exists in the center of the world.

This way of speaking is very typical of Bonhoeffer. In his Christologie of 1933 he spoke of Christ possessing the three Gestalten, Word, Sacrament, and Congregation, as we have indicated.³⁵ He returned again and again to speak about "being-in" Christ. He could speak of the Christian life as the life of Christ,³⁶ and Christ as congregation. A man meets God in Christ, and he meets Christ in the Church. The Church is the contemporary Christ, "Christ existing as community." The life of Christ has been "perpetuated on earth in the form of his Body, the Church," so that the Church ought to be thought of rather as a Person than as an institution.³⁷

If one were to fail to understand this aspect of Bonhoeffer's thought, his teaching about the world come of age and religionless Christianity could only be taken to mean a secularizing of the gospel, an accommodation of the gospel to a popular world-view of our times. Instead Bonhoeffer clearly taught that as Word, Sacrament, and Congregation, Christ still stands at the center of the world.³⁸

³⁴Prenter, "Bonhoeffer und der junge Luther," pp. 46-48.
³⁵Gesammelte Schriften, Band III, pp. 184-194; see Sherman, "Act And Being," p. 92; Pelikan, Jaroslav, "Bonhoeffer's Christologie of 1933," The Place of Bonhoeffer, pp. 146-149.
³⁶Ethics, p. 81; see also Act And Being, p. 130.
³⁷Sanctorum Communio, pp. 99-100; The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 216-218.
³⁸Marty, "Bonhoeffer: Seminarian's Theologian," p. 469,

In a moving poem Bonhoeffer entitled Christians And Unbelievers, he wrote,

Men go to God when they are sore bestead,
Pray to him for succour, for his peace, for bread,
For mercy for them sick, sinning or dead:
All men do so, Christian and unbelieving.

Men go to God when he is sore bestead,
Find him poor and scorned, without shelter or bread,
Whelmed under weight of the wicked, the weak, the dead:
Christians stand by God in his hour of grieving.³⁹

Elsewhere he wrote, "Christians range themselves with God in his suffering; that is what distinguishes them from the heathen."⁴⁰

The Christian is challenged to share in the sufferings of God at the hands of a godless world. To do this he must "plunge" into its life and live an altogether "worldly" life himself. He is not called to be religious in some particular way, or to be ascetic, but simply to participate in the sufferings of God in the world. Let the Christian stop bothering about his own needs, problems, sins, and fears, and let him be caught up into "the way of Christ." To be caught up in the "Messianic suffering of God in Jesus Christ" means discipleship and it means faith.

It is in such a life that we throw ourselves utterly in-
to the arms of God and participate in his sufferings in

³⁹Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 174.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 122.

the world and watch with Christ in Gethsemane, That is faith, that is metanoia, and that is what makes a man and a Christian.⁴¹

"The Church is her true self only when she exists for humanity." She might begin by giving away her endowments to the needy and the clergy live on free-will offerings or take some secular calling. She is to live in the world, not by "lording" it over the world, but by serving the world. She must witness to men in their various callings what it means to live in Christ, "to exist for others."⁴² Christians must live a "this-worldly" faith for the welfare of their fellows. They permit the cross of Christ to be formed in them and continually turn to meet the needs of the secular world. In this way, the Church does not save her own life, or simply endure persecution, but she "dies" like her Lord for the world.⁴³

The Church must leave her complacency behind and cease thinking in terms of her self-preservation. It is only when she gives herself away that she can participate in the suffering and impotence of her crucified Lord. The Church is not to seek martyrdom, but to practice self-denial in "being-for" man in the world today. This is repentance. Like her Lord the Church must identify herself with man in the world for whose sake Christ became incarnate and went to the cross.

The world come of age must be confronted by a "church under the cross." The modern secular world has come of age precisely in its relationship to

⁴¹Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 125; also pp. 122-124.

⁴²Ibid., p. 166; Fuller, Reginald H., "Liturgy And Devotion," The Place Of Bonhoeffer, p. 179.

⁴³Wentz, p. 576; Littell, p. 38.

the Church, despite all the attempts at Christianizing it in the past. The Church which participates in its Lord's sufferings in the world is the Church which respects and affirms the world come of age and witnesses to this world by "being-for" contemporary man in all aspects of his modern life.⁴⁴

MORTIFICATION

Unlike the work of many modern theologians, there is a rich doctrine of mortification in Bonhoeffer's theology.¹ The man who must die is the man who is "in Adam." "Being in Adam," Bonhoeffer believed to be the most Biblically grounded definition for being a sinner. Thus Luther's simul justus et peccator became the dialectic of "being in Adam," i.e. in untruth, and "being in Christ," i.e. in truth.² To be in Adam is to be in untruth, cor curvum in se. For this man, God becomes a "religious object," and man becomes his own creator and his own master. Bonhoeffer called this "the falsehood of naked self-lordship."³ Only "in Christ," in faith, does man acknowledge his creaturehood.

Man was created in the image of God, but in his act of rebellion he yielded to the serpent's temptation to become sicut deus. "Imago dei man"

⁴⁴Minthe, pp. 29-30, 36, 39; Prenter, "Bonhoeffer und der junge Luther,"

p. 45.

¹He was the student of K. Holl and therefore conversant with the findings of modern Luther research.

²Act And Being, p. 6.

³Ibid., p. 156; also pp. 148, 155.

drew his existence from God and knew himself in his creatureliness. "Sicut deus man" viewed his existence as "underived." He no longer needed a Creator, he became his own creator. He tore himself away from his creatureliness. He made himself god, and no longer had a God.

He is alone, he lives out of his own self, he no longer needs any other person. He is the Lord of this world... the solitary Lord and despot of the mute, violated, silenced, dead world of his ego.⁴

"In becoming like God, man has become a god against God," and has become imprisoned within his own "false self-deification."⁵

This man sicut deus finally comes to a point where he fears himself. His conscience indicts him and drives him to remorse. But often this conscience is man's final grasp at himself. Conscience can drive to despair, but it cannot fill man's need because it relies on man's own resources. It is not God's voice but man's own. It is man's defense against God. Therefore this conscience must itself be mortified when Christ comes to man. Jesus Christ becomes man's conscience.⁶

Before we carry this theme further, we should note what Bonhoeffer had to say about discipline. He believed that there is a great need in the Christian life for self-discipline, for daily meditation on the Word of God,

⁴Schöpfung und Fall, 1937, E. T. Creation And Fall, London, 1959, p. 92; also pp. 70-74, 85; The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 269-270.

⁵Creation And Fall, p. 93; Ethics, pp. 144, 197, 211-212; "Concerning The Christian Idea of God," 1931, Gesammelte Schriften, III, p. 101; The Cost Of Discipleship, p. 270.

⁶Act And Being, pp. 157-158, 166-167, 177; Creation And Fall, pp. 82-83; Ethics, pp. 149, 212-213; Sanctorum Communio, pp. 71-72.

and for asceticism. Not that such practices can effectively mortify the old man. Only Christ can do that. Still the life of faith is an unending struggle of the spirit against the flesh with every weapon at hand. The danger in all such practices is that the Christian, in his practice, may be tempted to imitate the sufferings of Christ. "This is a pious, but godless ambition." No Christian can suffer as Christ did and kill the old Adam. The most that such self-discipline can accomplish is to equip the Christian for better service.⁷

The work of mortification belongs to God. Over against any "practice" of mortification, there stands baptism as an act of God. In baptism the person dies "in Christ" and "once and for all." Thus the "means" by which the person is incorporated into the Body of Christ, into His death and resurrection, is baptism. As Christ died "once and for all" so does the Christian. This is not repeatable. The daily dying of the Christian is the consequence of his baptismal death. That which is repeatable is the "recollection" of the death of Christ which was experienced in baptism. This recollection needs to be repeated daily.

It is by living daily on this recollection that the saints are sanctified. And the gospel of which they are to be worthy is that which proclaims the death of the world and the flesh, and their own crucifixion and death with Christ on the cross and through baptism...⁸

There is a daily repentance and renewal which belongs with this. Such

⁷The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 151-153.

⁸Ibid., p. 253; also pp. 209-210, 249.

repentance is a kind of self-denial, which is not "a self-losing to oneself, but a self-finding in Christ." It is self-denial, not as the practice of acts of mortification or asceticism, but as a turning from oneself, no longer being aware of oneself, to be aware only of Christ.⁹

In the context of mortification, Bonhoeffer praised auricular confession highly. The root of all sin is superbia. Man wants to have a right to himself, he wants to be "as God." But auricular confession to a Christian brother is the humiliation of such pride. It is a "remedy for self-deception and self-indulgence." Confession is an act of mortification in which the Christian is conformed to the death of Christ. Because such mortification is so profoundly painful the Christian may try to evade it.

The cross of Jesus Christ destroys all pride. We cannot find the Cross of Jesus if we shrink from going to the place where it is to be found, namely, the public death of the sinner. And we refuse to bear the Cross when we are ashamed to take upon ourselves the shameful death of the sinner in confession.¹⁰

In the deep humiliation of such confession before a Christian brother, the old man dies, "but it is God who has conquered him." Here a break with the past is made and the Christian can look to the resurrection of Christ and to new life. Such confession is then fundamentally important, it is not something which may either be done or left undone. For through it, the "form of Jesus Christ" emerges in the Church.¹¹

⁹Act And Being, pp. 178-179; The Cost Of Discipleship, p. 77.

¹⁰Life Together, p. 114; also pp. 113-114; The Cost Of Discipleship, pp.260-261.

¹¹Life Together, pp. 114-115; Ethics, p. 51.

God desires that the sinner be parted from his sin, but so closely is man's life identified with sin that this separation can only be achieved by "dying." God cannot ignore the sin and guilt of man. There is no turning back the clock, it must be "eradicated." Man can impose neither death nor life upon himself. They can only take place in encounter with Christ. It is God who must put the sinner to death.¹²

These considerations have brought us to the real heart of Bonhoeffer's doctrine of mortification. In the essay entitled "Ethics As Formation" which his editor has placed at the beginning of his Ethics, there is the most systematic statement of his theology on this point. The key term here is "Gleichgestaltung," conformation. Man is to be transformed into the image of Christ.¹³

In Christ we no longer live our own lives, but he lives his life in us. The life of the faithful in the Church is indeed the Life of Christ in them.¹⁴

Man as creature is destined to become like his Creator. Fallen man is sicut deus, but it is a "false divinity." The God-man kills this false divinity and restores the image of God in man. In Adam mankind fell, in Christ mankind is drawn again into communion with God. The "form of fallen man," Adam, must be conformed with the "form of the new man," Christ. In death and resurrection the corpus Adae must be broken and the corpus Christi created.¹⁵

¹² Act And Being, pp. 159-160; The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 246, 258; Sanctorum Communio, p. 113.

¹³ Ethics, p. 18.

¹⁴ The Cost Of Discipleship, p. 219.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 269; Creation And Fall, pp. 71-72; Ethics, p. 162; Sanctorum Communio, pp. 106-108.

No man can accomplish this transformation for himself. There is no Christ-like "ideal" to be striven after. The form of Christ molds man's form into its likeness. It is Christ who shapes men into conformity with himself.¹⁶ When commentators like F. Sherman and J. Godsey speak of an imitatio Christi theology at this point, they fail to make Luther's sharp distinction between imitatio Christi and conformitas Christi, of which Bonhoeffer was aware as the student of Karl Holl. Even in The Cost Of Discipleship, where he came closest to the old imitatio Christi piety of the middle ages, he clearly distinguished between man modeling himself after a "god of his own invention," and the true God "molding" the human form into His image.¹⁷

One of the most fundamental characteristics of Bonhoeffer's theology, its Christological character, is nowhere more clearly seen than at this point. The Christian will be patterned after Christ, in whose life there are three motifs: incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection.

In the incarnation we learn of the love of God for His creation; in the crucifixion we learn of the judgment of God upon all flesh; and in the resurrection we learn of God's will for a new world.¹⁸

Elsewhere Bonhoeffer spoke of these three as: the "real" man, the "sentenced" man, and the man "made new."¹⁹

First, the incarnation. God does not wish to neglect his lost crea-

¹⁶Ethics, pp. 18, 20; The Cost Of Discipleship, p. 272.

¹⁷The Cost Of Discipleship, p. 270; Sherman, "The Problem Of A 'Trinitarian' Social Ethic," pp. 105-106, 166; Godsey, p. 280.

¹⁸Ethics, p. 89; also p. 80; Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 165.

¹⁹Ethics, pp. 45-46.

ture. He wishes to "recreate" him. There is only one way to achieve this purpose, and that is for God to take on the form of fallen man. God must Himself become man. As a consequence of the incarnation, all men are "with Christ." He bears human nature. Therefore His life, death, and resurrection are events which involve all men.²⁰

Second, man is to be conformed to the crucifixion of Christ. The Christian in baptism shares in the death Christ died. He is baptized into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Thus he becomes a member of the Body of Christ and lives "in Christ," in the Pauline phrase. In baptism the form of Christ's death is impressed upon his own. He is dead to the flesh, to sin, and to the world. Subsequently there comes that death which belongs to faith, which the Christian must daily die. It is not that he gives himself into death, but he is given into it by Christ. He is drawn into the daily "death-throes" of the flesh and the agony of the old man. This daily dying takes place in the warfare between the flesh and the spirit.

Beyond this daily dying, it is given to a few, though to only a few, actually to suffer for Him, as He once suffered for them. There is no greater glory, no higher privilege, for the Christian than this closest possible identification with the form of Christ crucified. Holy is the fellowship of the blessed martyrs. When Christians are insulted, suffer, and die for the sake of their Lord, Christ "takes on visible form in His Church."²¹

The reason Christians must die in the flesh is that Christ has begun

²⁰The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 215, 246-247, 270; Forell, George W., "Realized Faith, The Ethics Of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," The Place Of Bonhoeffer, pp. 212-213.

²¹Act And Being, pp. 179-180; The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 208, 216, 219-220, 273; Life Together, p. 48.

to live His life in them. In Him humanity undergoes crucifixion. Christ has taken upon Himself the human form, man's "flesh" and "nature," so that all who are His suffer and die with Him. The Christian participates in the Body of Christ.

We must first be conformed to the image of the suffering Servant who was obedient to the death of the cross. If we would bear the image of his glory, we must first bear the image of his shame.²²

In this conformation to the death of Christ, man is sentenced by God. Man must bear "God's sentence of death." It is necessary that he die the death of the sinner daily. He can live before God only as one who is sentenced. He is taken up by God and "executed on the cross" and reconciled. In this way, Bonhoeffer could say, "Christ is my death," and "the cross of Jesus is the death sentence upon the world."²³ Between man's "apostate life" and the life of Christ, there stands this death. But behind this "no" there is to be found the glorious "yes" of God as well.²⁴

Third, man is conformed to the resurrection of Christ. The Risen Christ bears this glorious "yes" which God addresses to the new man within Himself. For the crucified Christ is the One who could not be held by death. And the Christian who has been conformed to His incarnation and crucifixion shares in the glory of His resurrection as well. As new man, the Christian is "drawn into the image" and "identified with the form" of the risen Christ.

²²The Cost Of Discipleship, p. 272, this might well have been a quote from Luther; see also pp. 214-215, 257-258.

²³Ethics, pp. 13, 19, 90; Act And Being, p. 164; "Concerning The Christian

²⁴Ethics, p. 189.

He is a new man before God.

In the midst of death he is in life. In the midst of
sin he is righteous. In the midst of the old he is new.²⁵

No one who belongs to Christ can hear the "yes" without the "no" or the "no" without the "yes." This life is one in Jesus Christ and is in tension between the "no" and the "yes." It is the "no" of judgment and of the death of fallen life; it is the "yes" of creation, atonement, and redemption. It is a life which has been sentenced by God and delivered up to death, and which has been awakened by God to new life. Thus the Christian ought not to speak of the Christian life, but rather of Christ living in him. The incarnate, crucified, and glorified One has entered his life and taken charge.²⁶

Thus the Christian neither seeks to put himself to death for his sinfulness and guilt, nor to create new life for himself by pronouncing himself not guilty and righteous. On both counts, he looks not to himself, but to Christ alone. It is God's Word which both pronounces him guilty and declares him forgiven. Neither his "death" nor his "life" are determined by his own resources, both come to him from the Word from outside himself.²⁷

The man who is conformed to Christ turns from his imprisonment in himself to fix his gaze entirely on his Lord. The in se conversus (Luther)

²⁵Ethics, pp. 19-20, also p. 17; The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 248, 273.

²⁶Ethics, pp. 51-52, 189-190; The Cost Of Discipleship, p. 274.

²⁷Life Together, pp. 21-22. R. Prenter finds a close correlation between Bonhoeffer's conformitas Christi and that of Luther. This particularly in Luther's teaching that the crucified Christ is at one time man's "condemnation" (judicium) and his "righteousness" (justitia). Christ is man's righteousness as the crucified, the vicarious Bearer of man's sentence and condemnation. "Bonhoeffer und der junge Luther," pp. 38-39, 46-50.

begins to live in contemplation of Christ. The old man has died and the new arisen, for only the new man can live in "self-disregard," contemplating only Christ.

Man is in Christ; on that account he sees neither his sin nor his death, for there is neither sin nor death in Christ; furthermore he sees neither himself nor his own faith. He sees only Christ, as his Lord and his God.²⁸

It is only because He became like men that they can become like Him. Christians are transformed into His image, paying less and less attention to themselves and looking more and more to Him. The man who bears the image of the incarnate, crucified, and risen Lord is called to be the "imitator of God." (Eph. 5:1)²⁹

In this context, the call of Christ to discipleship is a call to come and die. It is a call to the death of the old man, because "only the man who is dead to his own will can follow Christ." For a man to follow Jesus and to adhere only to Him means "self-renunciation," a mortification his Master will reward an hundred fold. The old man dies in a man's following Christ and the new man is born as fellowship deepens with his Lord. Where a man is Christ's disciple, he surrenders his will to Him and finally Christ reigns alone in his heart.³⁰

True to the general Barthian cast of his theology as a whole, Bonhoefer-

²⁸ Act And Being, p. 181, also pp. 170-171, 175-177, 183-184.

²⁹ The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 269, 274-275; Ethics, pp. 80, 165.

³⁰ The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 79, 119, 143-144, 147.

fer's doctrine of mortification is consistently Christological. In an instructive passage in The Cost Of Discipleship, Bonhoeffer spoke of mortification as the "gift of grace."

Thus this death is not the act of an angry Creator finally rejecting his creation in his wrath, but the gracious death which has been won for us by the death of Christ; the gracious assumption of the creature by his Creator.³¹

Here he spoke of mortification as "the gracious assumption of the creature by his Creator."

In Luther, side by side with his teaching of the conformitas Christi, there stands his doctrine of the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei by which this conformation takes place. It is by the divine opus alienum that man is conformed to the death of Christ, just as it is by the opus proprium Dei that he is conformed to the resurrection. It is this latter dimension in Luther's theology which is missing in Bonhoeffer, as it is in Barth.

Bonhoeffer can speak of the wrath of God, if only occasionally. In an early statement, he could write, "God is wrath as well as love," and say that every statement about God's essence should contain both these contradictory aspects.³² In his first book, Sanctorum Communio, he could speak of man's loneliness in his guilt in the face of the wrath of God,³³ but this is an isolated statement. The phrase also occurs in another of Bonhoeffer's works where he spoke of the punishment of sin no longer being ex-

³¹The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 207-208.

³²"Concerning The Christian Idea Of God," 1931, p. 103.

³³p. 200.

perienced as the wrath of God, but as His gracious chastisement.³⁴ In The Cost Of Discipleship, the phrase occurs twice, once in the passage quoted above, and once where Bonhoeffer spoke of God's delivering the whole human race to death on the cross "in the judgment of His wrath."³⁵ Finally, in Letters And Papers From Prison there are a few scattered references to the wrath of God as divine judgment seen in the air raids and all the tragedies of the war. In one of these, he spoke of men saving themselves alive out of the debris of civilization, "as brands plucked from the burning," as the Creator destroys His handiwork.³⁶

These references notwithstanding, the center of Bonhoeffer's doctrine lies elsewhere. Mortification is explained "Christologically" within the framework of the conformitas Christi. When terminology like "the wrath of God" or "opus alienum Dei" or "opus proprium Dei" is very occasionally used, it is clear that it fulfills no central function, but is peripheral.

In this Bonhoeffer followed Barth faithfully,³⁷ who cannot speak of an opus alienum Dei apart from His revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. To do so would be "natural theology." The effect of this, however, is to exclude God from all history that is not history of the second article.³⁸

³⁴König David, Gesammelte Schriften, Band IV, pp. 294-320, cited in Godsey, pp. 149-150.

³⁵The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 247-248.

³⁶Pp. 66, 157. In another place he spoke of fallen man under the curse of the wrath of God, p. 153.

³⁷Although the degree of his dependence on Barth and fidelity to the Dialectical theology have nowhere been treated and represent a far more complicated relationship than might be supposed.

³⁸Prenter, "Luther's Theology Of the Cross", p. 231. As is well known, Barth subsumes the wrath of God under His love, because, he says, of his concern for the unity of God. Church Dogmatics, II/1, § 30, especially pp. 359-382. In III/3, § 50, pp. 353-362, where the terminology opus alienum and opus proprium Dei is used, it is robbed of the meaning Luther

The doctrine of the opus alienum Dei was framed at a time when sin was taken very seriously and it was considered necessary for God to oppose it with all the might of His opus alienum. In the Dialectical theology, there is no active power of sin, no tyrannical, demonic power that subjects man to slavery and which God destroys in His work of redemption.³⁹

Das Nichtige cannot really oppose God. It has already been defeated.⁴⁰ It has never been and it is not now a real adversary of God.

This basic position, shared by Barth and Bonhoeffer, makes it quite unnecessary and impossible to speak of an opus alienum Dei. This particular feature of their theology must be kept in view in all the discussion which follows.

ANFECHTUNG

If it were not for the lectures delivered by Bonhoeffer in 1937 at Finkelwalde, we would have virtually no knowledge at all of his thinking on the theme of Anfechtung. It is not a theme that he gave very much attention to

gave it. Das Nichtige is rejected by the opus alienum Dei which can only be understood in His opus proprium. The opus alienum Dei was fulfilled and accomplished once and for all, and therefore deprived of its object, when it took place in all its dreadful fullness in the death of Jesus Christ. III/3, p.362. This is certainly to regard the opus alienum Dei Christologically, but it robs it of its nature as a real work which God does in the lives of men and women today.

³⁹Wingren, Theology In Conflict, p. 25.

⁴⁰Church Dogmatics, III/3, pp. 366-367.

or that was in any way central or important to his theology as a whole. There are scattered references to the subject throughout his works, but these are few and not related in any important way to the topics with which he was really concerned.

Bonhoeffer could use the term, Anfechtung,¹ but throughout the lectures referred to, it is the other German word for temptation, Versuchung, which is used.² As we have noted in a previous chapter, the choice between the two terms is not a chance matter. Versuchung means temptation and implies enticement, which points toward a Satanic authorship for such temptation. One would not ordinarily speak of God as "enticing." Anfechtung means assault and implies attack and warfare which leaves the question of authorship open. Granted that Luther's usage of the term Anfechtung is a striking and unusual usage, where the term Versuchung is actually preferred,³ there is no desire to emphasize the opus alienum Dei. The divine authorship of such an opus alienum is softened or obscured.

Bonhoeffer spoke of three authors of temptation: Satan, human flesh, and God Himself.

However, Satan may be considered the chief author of temptation, because temptation is wholly against God. It is "inconceivable" that God would tempt men to doubt His Word and to apostasy. The tempter is the enemy of God. Satan attempts to alienate man from the Word of God and to expose man's sins in such a way as to further separate between God and him.

The second source of temptation lies in man's own self. While when

¹ As in Act And Being, p. 168.

² Versuchung, E.T. Temptation by Downham, Kathleen, London, 1955.

³ Within the limitations of this study, Spener and Bonhoeffer.

discussing the Satanic origin of much temptation, its objectivity is underscored, when the temptation of the flesh is spoken of, the subjectivity of temptation is emphasized. Both aspects need to be given due consideration in our thinking about this matter.

The third author of temptation is God Himself, Bonhoeffer wrote, however he immediately quoted James 1:13: "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God;' for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one..." Man must recognize his full guilt in temptation. It is blasphemy to make God answerable for it. God cannot in any way be open to evil, for that would attribute division to Him and make His Word and will questionable and doubtful.

Since evil has no place in God, not even the possibility of evil, temptation to evil must never be laid at God's door. God himself tempts no one.⁴

Still nothing can happen on earth without the permission of God. God must first abandon man to provide the opportunity for temptation, and even Satan must indirectly serve God's purposes. Because of man's sin, God permits Satan to execute the death of the sinner, for only if the old man dies can the new man rise from the dead. Here Bonhoeffer quoted I Samuel 2:6, as Luther had in the same context: "The Lord kills and brings to life." Satan

⁴ Temptation, p. 26; also pp. 24-27. In this context it is helpful to note that Luther preserved the sovereignty of God by making it clear that evil as Satan, the world, human flesh, and death itself necessarily had to serve God's purposes, as an *opus alienum Dei*. The Barthian theology to which Bonhoeffer is here indebted preserves the sovereignty of God, in this regard, by denying the might of evil. Evil becomes das Nichtige. It has been conquered by God and can in no way actually oppose Him. See Church Dogmatics, III/3, § 50.

must serve God's plan of salvation, however unwillingly. God turns even sin and death into life and righteousness.

God permits temptation, Bonhoeffer wrote, first, in order to destroy Satan; for in the freedom God permits him, Satan destroys himself. Secondly, God permits it, because it brings man knowledge of his sinfulness, out of which redemption can subsequently come. Satan is the "executer" of God's purpose, however unknowingly. In our Lord Jesus Christ the wrath of God was propitiated, the grace of God overcame the wrath of God, and the power of Satan was conquered.

Where the whole temptation of the flesh, all the wrath of God is obediently endured in Jesus Christ, there the temptation is conquered in Jesus Christ, there the Christian finds behind the God of wrath who tempts him the God of grace who tempts no one.⁵

Although Satan is the executer of temptation, it is God's will which is ultimately done. First, as the accuser of man, Satan leads man to knowledge of his sin. However, the knowledge of sin is the basis of forgiveness, and thus belongs to God's plan of salvation. Secondly, Satan torments man in the flesh, but the effect of this is to mortify it, and thus the sinner "is driven by Satan directly into the very hands of God." Thirdly, not even the last enemy, death, is victorious, for God turns it into life.⁶

Temptation comes because it is necessary that man's "egocentric world" be shaken, so that in despair of himself he may come to know God in faith.

⁵ Temptation, p. 30; also pp. 27-28; see Act And Being, pp. 160-161, 167.

⁶ Temptation, pp. 28-29.

In Luther's phrase, the world becomes too "narrow" for man, and everything is his accuser.⁷ Therefore the Christian prays, "lead us not into temptation." He has no desire to prove his strength in such a struggle. The risks are too great. When the Bible describes temptation it does not do so as the testing of a man's strength, but instead as an experience in which a man's very strength is turned against him. It is not for man to choose the hour of his temptation, the "times" are in God's hands. Suddenly he is abandoned, by all his strength, by other men, by God Himself. God withdraws His hand from him and he is alone.⁸ The Christian does not savor such isolation.

Utilizing his categories of being-in-Adam and being-in-Christ, Bonhoeffer wrote that men are tempted either in Adam or in Christ. If in Adam, man is bound to fall. If in Christ, Satan is bound to fall. Adam is defenseless before the tempter, he is no match for his adversary.

However there is a second kind of temptation of which the Bible speaks. Here Christ, who took upon Himself "the whole temptation experience of the flesh," is tempted. Even the Son of God is abandoned in the wilderness to His weakness, loneliness, and hunger. He is left to temptation by His Father, who is not near at hand in temptation, but far distant. Jesus is tempted in His flesh, then in His faith in His Father, and finally in His

⁷"The Theology Of Crisis And Its Attitude Toward Philosophy And Science," 1931, Gesammelte Schriften, III, p. 123. Bonhoeffer notes that Enge (narrowness), Angst (anxiety), and bange (worried) are words with a common root in German, Act And Being, pp. 167-168.

⁸Temptation, pp. 9-11, 25; Act And Being, p. 130. Bonhoeffer speaks in the first person about such experiences in Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 17.

allegiance to Him. All these temptations seek to separate Jesus from the Word of God. There is no heroic struggle here, for Christ is abandoned and robbed of all His strength. He is left with nothing but the Word, but in the Word there is the strength of God, and through the Word victory is finally His.⁹

The heart of what Bonhoeffer had to say about temptation is to be understood "Christologically."¹⁰ In the temptation of Christ, the temptation of Adam is ended. As in Adam's temptation all flesh fell, in Christ's victory has been achieved. Henceforth it is not His followers who are tempted, but Christ who is tempted in them. The power of temptation has been broken in the temptation of Christ and His followers may share in that victory. Temptations will continue to befall them, but they will be the temptations of Christ, in which the victory has already been won.¹¹

Since the temptations of Christians are those of Christ, Bonhoeffer discussed them on the analogy of Christ's threefold temptation: the fleshly, the spiritual, and the temptation of final allegiance. The fleshly temptation Bonhoeffer divided into that of desire and that of suffering. Where the temptation of desire is strong, only the image of the Crucified can conquer it. In it the flesh is put to death. Christ is the death of the flesh and Christ overcomes the temptation of desire.

The second fleshly temptation is that of suffering. There are two kinds of suffering: general suffering such as sickness, poverty, need; and

⁹Temptation, pp. 12, 16-21.

¹⁰His title is: "The Temptation Of Christ In His People," Temptation, p. 20.

¹¹Temptation, pp. 21, 23-24.

suffering for the sake of Christ. The latter temptation is greater because this suffering, unlike general suffering, could be avoided by the simple denial of Christ.¹²

The second class of temptations is that of the spirit. This also is twofold: the temptation of securitas and of desperatio. The sin of spiritual pride does not take God's judgment seriously. It is the sin of what Bonhoeffer elsewhere called "cheap grace." Believing God to be a God of grace, it pronounces forgiveness on itself even before the sin. It is a kind of spiritual security under grace. This way ends in idolatry.

In the temptation to desperation and despair it is not the judgment of God which is not taken seriously, but His grace and promise. Man rebels against the grace of God, demands "proof" of it or an "experience" of it. This drives him either to blasphemy or to self-destruction. Doubt sowed in the Christian's heart brings everything to uncertainty and meaninglessness. Old sins torture and torment him. He despairs of himself, the world, and God.

Some of the greatest saints have known this desertio gratiae, Bonhoeffer remarked, referring to a statement of Luther's. It may even be said that this was the temptation of Christ on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But behind God's judgment, there was reconciliation. Even in this most difficult temptation, the Christian hears, "My grace is sufficient for you."¹³

The temptation of final allegiance is for the Christian much as it was

¹² Temptation, pp. 31-40.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 41-44, 12.

for his Lord. Satan tempts to defection from God by promising all the power and happiness of earth. In this final temptation as in all the others, victory is in Jesus Christ alone. In temptation man is abandoned by others and even by God, but in deepest solitude, he finds Christ. In the victory of Christ he is victorious. This is the Christological view of temptation.¹⁴

Bonhoeffer's view of temptation, then, must be understood as a conformitas Christi, from which the dialectic opus alienum/opus proprium Dei is missing. He emphasized the negative in "lead us not into temptation," and wrote that whether Christ would give Himself to a tempted man was "always in the balance." He believed there were great risks involved in temptation and that therefore it "should never be regarded as a dialectical point of transition on the road to faith."¹⁵

Later in the same work, he noted that for the Christian to hear only his accuser, to feel cast out, as though death and hell reached out to seize him, is temptation which comes between the Christian and Christ. As such it is "rebellion against Christ" and "mistrust of the grace offered in Christ." In such temptation man runs the risk of losing Christ, unless Christ Himself puts an end to it and restores man's faith.

The opinion that such temptation is needed in order to come to faith resembles Hegel's dialectic in making evil a necessary stage on the road to good. This temptation belongs wholly to the righteousness of the flesh,

¹⁴ Temptation, pp. 45-46; see also Act And Being, pp. 168-169; Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 142.

¹⁵ In this context, he characterized Karl Holl as "inclined to this error," Luther, pp. 67 ff. and passim, but he might as well have taken Luther to task on this matter as his old professor. Act And Being, p. 168.

and this conscience¹⁶ is itself defection from Christ.¹⁷

Whether or not this resembles Hegel's dialectic is irrelevant, but that it resembles Luther's dialectic of old man/new man, opus alienum/opus proprium Dei, Anfechtung/faith is not irrelevant.

In this work on Temptation, Bonhoeffer then denied that temptation belongs to the necessary course of God's dealings with men. Temptation is not "bound to come" to man. God is not compelled to deliver his own to Satan or to yield such power to the tempter. Otherwise, Bonhoeffer wrote, Christ has counseled His followers, in the Lord's Prayer, to pray against God's will for man.¹⁸ The denial of temptation as a part of the work of God with men, by which He humbles and destroys the old man to make way for the new, is necessary only where the opus alienum Dei is itself denied.

The old man who must die is conformed to the death of Christ and the new man arises conformed to the resurrection of Christ, but Anfechtung, or as here, Versuchung, is not a part of the opus alienum Dei by which this is effected.

THE LAW

Bonhoeffer's doctrine of the law also lies within the general structure of the Barthian theology. Thus Bonhoeffer began his thinking about the law,

¹⁶I.e. a conscience which accuses, separates a man from Christ, and plunges him into temptation.

¹⁷Act And Being, pp. 177-178.

¹⁸Temptation, pp. 12-13.

not with any natural theology, but with Christ's fulfillment of the law in His crucifixion.

It was the law which led Christ to the cross and there all God's judgment against the sinfulness of mankind was borne by Him. He was made sin for men, became cursed and damned for them. The law demanded its right of Him and received it. But as a result, the law has lost its right over Him. Its curse is ended and men are free from it in Him.¹

The dying man's experiences through the law must be understood "Christologically." It is the Word of God which brings repentance and faith, which brings the Christian to the cross and to the resurrection. The "unity" of this movement is preserved in Christ. God's Word in Jesus Christ pronounces man guilty and God's Word in Jesus Christ pronounces him not guilty. The Christian lives wholly by this Word of God pronounced upon him. Neither his mortification nor his new life is determined by his "own resources," both are found only in the Word of God which comes to him from without.²

Man seeks to flee his guilt, but he is arrested by Christ and forced to recognize it and the death which accompanies it. Man sees that he is in death, when Christ assails him through the law. It is in the death of Christ that man learns that the whole of Adam is in sin and that he must die to the law. His being in Adam is judged by the death of Christ. In this sense man dies through the law only in the death of Christ.³

The man who would escape from his guilt, in Christ, must also forego the

¹Sanctorum Communio, p. 110; "Predigt-Entwurf über das Gesetz," 1935, Gesammelte Schriften, IV, pp. 209-210; The Cost Of Discipleship, p. 112.

²Sanctorum Communio, p. 147; Life Together, pp. 21-22.

³Act And Being, pp. 160-163, 167.

forgiveness that is in Christ. This means whoever is brought into relationship to Christ is brought into relationship to both law and gospel in Him. He is pronounced guilty in Christ and forgiven in Christ. Man sees himself in sin in Christ and man knows himself forgiven in Christ. Daily repentance and daily forgiveness belong to the Christian life in the death and resurrection of Christ.⁴

Bonhoeffer could speak of safeguarding the gospel of forgiveness by insuring that repentance accompanies it and of the penultimate preceding the ultimate. The final word of grace is preceded by the penultimate which, in this context, means a knowledge of sin and an acknowledgment of guilt. He counseled that men want to get to the New Testament too soon, while they cannot and must not speak the last word before they have spoken the next to the last.

It is only when one submits to the law that one can speak of grace, and only when one sees the anger and wrath of God hanging like grim realities over the head of one's enemies that one can know something of what it means to love them and forgive them.⁵

While Bonhoeffer could speak in this way as though the law preceded the gospel and brought man to a knowledge of sin in preparation for grace, it is far more customary for him to speak in Barthian terms: of a "Christological" doctrine of law and gospel, where the sequence is gospel and law, and the law is understood as proceeding from the gospel, and where as a re-

⁴Ethics, p. 210; Godsey, p. 77.

⁵Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 50; The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 259-260; Ethics, pp. 82-83; Harrelson, pp. 117, 134.

sult the emphasis lies on the third and not on the second use of the law.

In his early writings Bonhoeffer spoke of Christ revealing "God's ultimate claim" and in so doing calling to repentance. His incarnation serves to convince men of the impossibility of their coming to God by themselves. His life which led to the cross, His condemnation as a sinner on the cross, convince the world of its condemnation, its sin, and its guilt. In addition, it is the grace of God which condemns all human efforts to be like God or to reach God whether by "works" of the moral life or by "religion." Grace destroys all these attempts to storm the throne of God and declares man to be a sinner who offends the glory of God. Grace, as the activity of God, stands absolutely opposed to all human endeavor. It condemns and forgives.⁶

In later works the theme is carried forward. Bonhoeffer wrote, the way to the law is through the cross of Christ.⁷ Even within the congregation men seek to conceal their sin from themselves and from others, but the grace of the gospel confronts them with the truth about themselves. All their shame is ended in the presence of Christ. Sin, of course, wishes to remain unknown, but the gospel breaks into the "seclusion of the heart" and brings the sin to light. In this context Bonhoeffer quoted Psalm 107:16, God breaks gates of brass and bars of iron.⁸

In his Ethics this emphasis on the law proceeding from the gospel is

⁶Sanctorum Communio, p. 109; "The Theology Of Crisis And Its Attitude Toward Philosophy And Science," p. 112; "The Religious Experience Of Grace And The Ethical Life," 1930/31, Gesammelte Schriften, III, pp. 96-97.

⁷The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 112-115, 251.

⁸Interesting because the use of this verse in this context he must have learned from Luther. Life Together, pp. 110-112.

made more clear. Here he spoke of the Christian's "willing acceptance of the sentence passed on him by the divine love."⁹ It must be understood that guilt is not transgression against an abstract law, but rather "defection from Christ." It is defection from that form which is meant to take form in men. In this sense, confession of guilt should be made in the presence of this "form of Christ."¹⁰

Later, in a section on the primus usus of the law, he indicated that this civil or disciplinary use of the law can not be exercised in "detachment from the gospel." It cannot be separated from the cross of Christ and the proclamation of the gospel. The primus usus in fact forms part of the Christian's confession of Christ. This point is made again and again.¹¹

Interestingly Bonhoeffer contended that both sequences, gospel and law as well as law and gospel, the Barthian and the Lutheran, are "justified and necessary." However, his own preference was for the former. He spoke of "God's love for the world in Jesus Christ as law and gospel." Here law and gospel are clearly derived from "God's love for the world in Jesus Christ," i.e. the gospel. Elsewhere he spoke of "both the claim (law) and the comfort (gospel) of Jesus Christ," and the proclamation of the Church as "Jesus Christ in the law and the gospel."¹²

Here the preaching of the gospel contains the preaching of the law in itself. It can be said, then, that man perceives his sin in Christ, that he sees his sinfulness precisely in the forgiveness of sins conferred by

⁹Ethics, p. 16.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 46-47.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 275, 280-281, 284.

¹²Ibid., pp. 281, 283, 321, 323; parenthetical additions mine.

Christ. Thus the word of Christ is not only gospel, but also law, not only grace, but also commandment.¹³ There can be no question about the fact that this is a "Christological" doctrine of law and gospel where both are seen to derive from and to find their unity in Jesus Christ. Where such a doctrine of the law is held, it is quite meaningless to speak of an opus alienum Dei.¹⁴

As is well known Barth teaches that the law is derived from the gospel. He speaks of the law as a "form of the gospel" and of the law "enclosed" in the gospel.¹⁵ Characteristically he speaks of Christ as man's judgment and of man condemned in God's love. In all this there is no opus alienum Dei and no second use of the law as a part of it.¹⁶

G. Wingren, who is concerned to preserve Luther's sequence of law and gospel, criticizes Barth for displacing the death and resurrection of Christ with His birth at the center of the kerygma. The sequence law and gospel corresponds to death and resurrection, the law kills and the gospel makes alive. This sequence is meaningless when the death and resurrection of Christ have been displaced by His birth. Then the question of the entrance of the divine into the sphere of the human, the question of revelation, of knowledge of God, becomes central. The twofold law and gospel is replaced

¹³Ebeling, p. 56; Godsey, pp. 77, 268.

¹⁴In a very interesting critique of the doctrine of the usus legis in the Lutheran Confessional Writings, Bonhoeffer said, "the concept of usus is open to misunderstanding with regard to its subject...", Ethics, p. 285. There was no problem here for the writers of the Confessions. The "subject" of the usus legis was God and this was seen as part of His opus alienum. This becomes a problem only when it is not possible to speak of an opus alienum Dei.

¹⁵Church Dogmatics, II/2, pp. 757, 557 respectively.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 735-752, § 37, 39 generally.

by the single gospel in which the law is contained. Where the question of knowledge is central, the law could not precede the gospel, otherwise man would already possess a partial knowledge of God before the gospel had been given.

The sequence law and gospel, judgment and grace, implies that the function of the Word is to kill and to make alive. The old man must be killed so that the new man may arise. The law and gospel are active forces, each performing its task in the hearer. Barth does not like the language, "old man," "new man." Instead his work presupposes a man without knowledge of God, to whom that knowledge is to be given. It is not a man who is already under the law of God to whom the gospel comes as great good news. The second article of the creed has altogether taken the place of the first. In this Barthian position,¹⁷ Bonhoeffer shared.

This affinity Bonhoeffer demonstrated in a very interesting way in his Ethics. In upholding the sequence of law and gospel, Luther spoke of the need for man to be "made" a sinner by the law before the forgiveness of the gospel could follow. Here he followed the Word of our Lord that those who knew their need were most open to forgiveness: "the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." (Matt. 21:31) Bonhoeffer expressly disagreed, writing,

It was the experience of other times that the wicked found their way to Christ while the good remained remote from Him. The experience of our own time is that

¹⁷Wingren, Theology In Conflict, pp. 34-35, 110, 114-115, 124-128; Creation And Law, E.T. by Mackenzie, R., Edinburgh, 1961, pp. 13, 173.

it is the good who find their way back to Christ and that the wicked obstinately remain aloof from Him. Other times could preach that a man must first become a sinner, like the publican and the harlot, before he could know and find Christ, but we in our time must say rather that before a man can know and find Christ he must first become righteous...¹⁸

The question of the relationship of the good man to Christ ought no longer to be neglected, otherwise wickedness is justified and goodness is not. The danger is that wickedness itself may inadvertently be commended.¹⁹ The point made here belongs to the same kind of thinking found in the repudiation of "religion" in Letters And Papers From Prison. There guilt is one of the "boundary-situations" expressly named to which the activity of God is confined by "religion." There is no room in such a position for the view that the law leads man to a knowledge of sin, a knowledge of his need for God, in preparation for the coming of the gospel. It is this, in fact, which is expressly repudiated. Once again we are led irresistibly to the conclusion that there is no opus alienum Dei here and no second use of the law as a part of it.

As we have also noted in previous chapters, where the law is not understood as a part of the opus alienum Dei in a theology, the third use of the law tends to predominate over the second. This is certainly true in the case of Bonhoeffer's theology. It may particularly be seen in his The

¹⁸Ethics, p. 182.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 183-184.

Cost Of Discipleship where his cutting polemic against "cheap grace" occurs and there is a strong emphasis on the obedience discipleship demands. In expounding the Sermon on the Mount, Bonhoeffer taught that Jesus bound His disciples to the Old Testament law. No one could be His disciple who disregarded it. He Himself perfectly kept it and because His disciples were bound to Him, they must obey the law as He did. Jesus' perfect fulfillment of the law did not release them from obedience to it, but rather compelled obedience of them. The aim of the Christian life is to do the good works which the law demands. God's law is still in force and it still demands fulfillment.²⁰ The only conduct appropriate to the law is doing it.²¹

Here then we have a theology which does not understand the law, any more than Anfechtung, as a part of the opus alienum Dei. There is no opus alienum Dei. The law is understood rather as proceeding from the gospel, as a part of the conformation with Christ. The emphasis which in Luther falls on the second use of the law in this theology falls on the third use. The whole matter is understood "Christologically" as conformitas Christi and the opus alienum Dei has disappeared.

THE CROSS OF THE CHRISTIAN

Certainly one of the fruits of Bonhoeffer's Luther study, as a student

²⁰The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 109-114, 267.

²¹Ethics, pp. 167-168, 215. In an interesting but incomplete section in his Ethics, Bonhoeffer noted that Luther in the Schmalkald Articles recognized only two uses of the law, while Lutheran Orthodoxy hesitated between duplex, triplex, and quadruplex usus legis, pp. 273, 285.

of Karl Holl, is his rich doctrine of the cross of the Christian. After a long period during which this doctrine of the reformation has been in eclipse, it has reappeared in the Luther renaissance and certainly here in the work of Bonhoeffer. Interest in what he had to say has been heightened by the fact that he wrote under the heel of Nazism and sealed his teaching about the cross of the Christian with his own martyrdom.

He defined the cross as containing two elements: suffering and rejection. Both elements are present in the cross of Christ and in those of His disciples.¹ In a moving passage in Letters And Papers From Prison, he wrote,

It is infinitely easier to suffer in obedience to a human command than to accept suffering as free, responsible men. It is infinitely easier to suffer with others than to suffer alone. It is infinitely easier to suffer as public heroes than to suffer apart and in ignominy. It is infinitely easier to suffer physical death than to endure spiritual suffering. Christ suffered as a free man alone, apart and in ignominy, in body and in spirit, and since that day many Christians have suffered with Him.²

The Church does not really want a Lord who suffered and was rejected, as no one does, because it does not want the "law of suffering" imposed upon it. But the disciple is not above his master.

¹The Cost Of Discipleship, p. 76.

²P. 145.

³The Cost Of Discipleship, p. 77.

The disciple is a disciple only in so far as he shares in his Lord's suffering and rejection. This is the "badge" of true discipleship. Bonhoeffer cites Luther with approval on his teaching that suffering was one of the marks of the true Church. The Church is always vulnerable to persecution and even to martyrdom for the gospel's sake. Were it to renounce suffering and rejection at the hands of the world for the gospel's sake, it would have ceased to follow its Lord. Bonhoeffer would agree with Luther that there are two crosses: that "high crucifying," in Luther's phrase, of which only Christ is capable; and that cross which belongs to His disciples when they take His life and death for their example. Only the cross of Christ has redemptive efficacy. He bore man's flesh and his sins and made atonement for him. To the Church there remains the task of bearing the world's sufferings. The world still looks for someone to bear their weight. In this the Church follows its Lord. If the Church will not bear this "yoke" of Christ, it will necessarily carry a heavier burden, its own yoke, the yoke of its self.⁴

The disciples are "the People under the cross." They shall have their Lord's reward, but not without persecution.

they bear their sorrow in the strength of him who bears them up, who bore the whole suffering of the world upon the cross...they stand as strangers in the world in the power of him who was such a stranger to the world that it crucified him.⁵

⁴The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 77, 80-82.

⁵Ibid., pp. 98-99, also pp. 90-91.

His followers are strangers to the world because they live in the discipleship of obedience to Christ by values which turn all values of the world upside down. Thus their lot is suffering and rejection, but their consolation is that in their suffering they are like their master. Although Christ's suffering for man's redemption is finished, not all His suffering on earth is complete. There remains a "residue of suffering" for His Church to fulfill before He comes again. (Col. 1:24)⁶

As we have noted, in the poem entitled "Christians And Unbelievers," which Bonhoeffer sent to Eberhard Bethge in 1944, he wrote,

Men go to God when he is sore bestead,
Find him poor and scorned, without shelter or bread,
Whelmed under weight of the wicked, the weak, the dead;
Christians stand by God in his hour of grieving.⁷

In explanation he wrote,

Christians range themselves with God in his suffering;
that is what distinguishes them from the heathen...Man
is challenged to participate in the sufferings of God
at the hands of a godless world.⁸

The cross of the Christian is the result of an "exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ." It does not come to the Christian by accident, but it comes because of his discipleship of Christ. It is not a kind of general suffering which belongs to human life and which everyone must endure, but

⁶ The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 138, 192-193, 220; see also "Predigt-Entwurf über das Kreuz," 1935, Gesammelte Schriften, IV, pp. 215-216.

⁷ Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 174.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 122-123.

it belongs specifically to the Christian life. It is not the "everyday calamities," the "trials and tribulations" of life, it is sharing in the suffering of Christ. It is never suffering alone, but always suffering and rejection. It must be rejection incurred in the service of Christ, not rejection "won" by some self-chosen cause or program.⁹

This rejection comes because the Christian is a disciple of Jesus Christ. The characteristics of discipleship described in the Beatitudes overturn all the values by which the world lives.

they who renounce possessions, fortune, rights, righteousness, honor, and force for the sake of following Christ, will be distinguished from the world. The world will be persecuted for righteousness' sake.¹⁰

This persecution belongs to the Christian as a disciple, and it has belonged to him in every age, but Bonhoeffer believed that today we were approaching "an age of wide-spread persecution." He believed that the time was coming when a confession of faith in Christ would incur the "hatred and fury" of the world and "ostracism" from human society. Christians will be harried by the world and subjected to assault and maltreatment. Christians will be suffering openly for their faith. Bonhoeffer believed that this was the "true significance of all the movements and conflicts of our age."¹¹

Thus Bonhoeffer taught that the disciple must bear the cross after his Master and that the true cross is that which he bears as a Christian, i.e. the cross of persecution. Bonhoeffer also followed Luther in insisting

⁹ The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 78, 238.
¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 102-103, 107-108.
¹¹ Ibid., pp. 135, 148, 240.

that the cross could not be chosen. The Christian need not go out looking for a cross to bear, the cross stands at the beginning of the Christian life and he has only to pick it up. Each Christian has his own share of suffering and rejection to bear, some are called to martyrdom while others are sent a cross no heavier than they can bear. But the cross is the same.

Bonhoeffer recognized that there is a very real danger in speaking of "asceticism" and the cross of the Christian. The danger is that the Christian may wish to imitate the sufferings of Christ, a "pious but godless ambition," Bonhoeffer wrote as we have elsewhere noted. Behind this "ambition" there lurks the presumption that man can take the path of Christ's passion and suffer as He did. Bearing the cross dare not become the route the Christian takes to his own salvation.¹² In this context Bonhoeffer quoted a beautiful passage from Luther, paraphrasing the call of Christ.

Behold, that is the way of the cross. You cannot find it yourself, so you must let me lead you as though you were a blind man...Not the work which you choose, not the suffering you devise, but the road which is clean contrary to all that you choose or contrive or desire, that is the road you must take. To that I call you and in that you must be my disciple.¹³

However, the real heart of Bonhoeffer's teaching about the cross of the Christian lies in its Christological character, as we have already observed this in his doctrines of mortification, Anfechtung, and law and gospel. In

¹²The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 78-79, 153, 192, 207-208.

¹³Ibid., pp. 82-83. Bonhoeffer does not identify the quotation.

an early sermon he spoke about the Christian's being "sentenced" and "crucified," "judged by God," nailed on the cross.¹⁴ This is a "Christ-suffering" which every Christian must experience. It is the dying of his old man which results from his encounter with Christ. The Disciple surrenders himself to Christ "in union with His death." When the Christian embarks upon discipleship, he gives himself to death. The cross confronts the Christian at the very beginning of his life of discipleship, for "when Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." Communion with Christ means "death in Jesus Christ." The old man dies at the call of Christ, for it is always a call to forsake one's own will in order to follow the Master.¹⁵

No one can will the death of his old man or put the old man to death. The old man dies "in, through, and with Christ." Christ is the death of the old man. This is the fellowship of the cross to which the disciple must submit, and suffer and die with his Lord.¹⁶

The Christian lives and suffers in "bodily communion" with Christ. As the earthly body of Jesus underwent crucifixion and death, so must his disciples undergo crucifixion and death. The cross which He suffered in the body is now laid upon His Body, the Church. To some of its members, who are not ashamed of their fellowship with His Body, He grants the privilege of suffering "for Him." There is no greater privilege for the Christian than this. The Christian works and suffers "for Christ." Each Christian has his own share in this suffering, and blessed is he who is permitted to suffer for the body of Christ.¹⁷

¹⁴"Predigt-Entwurf über das Kreuz," p. 215.

¹⁵The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 79-80.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 196, 207-208.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 214-215, 219-220, 255.

The Church and the individual Christian must become "partakers of the form of Christ." In the "figure of the Crucified" they discern themselves. Then having shared in the shame of the cross, they may become partakers in the resurrection to a new righteousness and a new life.¹⁸

The Christian becomes oblivious of himself and looks only to Christ. In this way he no longer notices the pain he bears. To bear the cross is the only real triumph over suffering. Christ prayed that the cup might pass from Him and it did pass from Him, "but only by His drinking it." The cross was His triumph over suffering and became the way to communion with God for mankind. "The cross is the only power in the world which proves that suffering love can vanquish evil." In this way the Christian, like his Lord, "transcends the world" and wins the victory.¹⁹

Regin Prenter is very appreciative of Bonhoeffer's recovery of a theology of the cross. He credits both Luther and Bonhoeffer with holding a theology of the word, what we have called the "objective" half of Luther's dialectic in previous chapters, together with a theology of the cross, the "subjective" half of Luther's dialectic. Bonhoeffer's powerful polemic against "cheap grace" in The Cost Of Discipleship is, in these terms, a critique of a theology of the word without a theology of the cross. Bonhoeffer's corrective was to emphasize that faith in Christ is a fleeing to the Crucified and an acknowledgement of the judgment which is pronounced on man in His suffering and death. Whoever would flee this judgment, cannot believe in the Crucified. The cross of Christ becomes identical with the Christian's

¹⁸ Ethics, pp. 13, 16, 51-52,

¹⁹ The Cost Of Discipleship, pp. 77-78, 81, 130, 137.

cross and the latter receives rejection and condemnation in the cross of Christ. Such a doctrine of the cross of the Christian insures that the cross of Christ will not be prostrated into "cheap grace." Without such a theology of the cross, the gospel is changed into a "principle" of grace which may be intellectually accepted or rejected.²⁰

In this note of appreciation we can certainly share. Along with Prenter we must agree that Bonhoeffer has performed a real service for contemporary theology by teaching a doctrine of the cross of the Christian which is rich and profound. His own bearing of the cross and his eventual martyrdom have given his teaching on this subject the hearing it deserves. It is a moving experience to re-read The Cost Of Discipleship of 1937 in the light of the events of 1945.

However while there is in his theology a deep understanding of the cross of the Christian as a part of the conformitas Christi, it is nowhere seen as a part of the opus alienum Dei. Confirmation to Christ in His death and resurrection is an important theme in Luther's theology, from which Bonhoeffer learned it. We have him to thank for restating it so clearly and forcefully. However, like his teaching on mortification, Anfechtung, and the law, it is not understood as a part of the opus alienum Dei.

²⁰"Bonhoeffer und der junge Luther," pp. 34, 38-40, 50; see also his "Luther's Theology Of The Cross," pp. 223-226, 230, 233.

CONCLUSION

What assessment can be made of Bonhoeffer's work? Certainly none can be made without a critical consideration of the thought which won him such widespread acclaim. What did Bonhoeffer mean when he spoke of die mündige Welt? It is by no means simple to answer.

He certainly meant the discovery of the scientific method and the control which this has given man over nature and to a degree over his own nature. In addition he must have meant modern man's feeling of autonomy, his sense of self-mastery and the ability to control his own destiny without any dependence on resources outside himself.

If this is essentially what Bonhoeffer meant by die mündige Welt, no one would question his judgment. However, it would contain nothing new. There is a second meaning which implies that man is learning to live with his freedom, without any reliance on resources outside himself.¹ This is to say that in addition to a scientific and technological coming of age, there is a genuine maturity which man is discovering in the exercise of his autonomy. It is this second half of the meaning which cannot so readily be granted. If this second meaning is essentially what is meant, A.R. Vidler writes, "it is hoped that the present state of the world is not a register of man's coming of age."²

Bonhoeffer certainly did not intend "an uncritical baptism of the unredeemed world." Nevertheless, the phrase is unfortunate in that it implies

¹See Jenkins, Beyond Religion, pp. 35-36, 85; "Religion And Coming Of Age," pp. 211-212.

²Turner, H.E.W., "Paper Read To The Clergy Of Houghton-le-spring Rural Deanery," The Honest To God Debate, p. 146; Vidler, "Religion And The National Church," p. 253.

human maturity, even a certain spiritual maturity.³ This latter judgment has been disputed by many voices, particularly by two classes of critics, the existentialist theologians and the parish pastors. We shall have more to say about the first class below. Here we should note that it is not unimportant that Bonhoeffer never served as a parish pastor in the usual sense, but was an academician throughout his life. It is difficult to imagine his concluding that man has outgrown his dependence on resources outside himself and is learning to live effectively by his new autonomy, if he had served the needs of real people in a community anywhere.⁴

This second meaning of the phrase die mündige Welt is sharpened by Bonhoeffer's rejection of any religion defined as an answer to a felt need in man. For these "needs" to which religion has traditionally been addressed, Bonhoeffer used the terminology, boundary-situations. In this use of terminology, the Grenze lies between God and His good creation on the one side and das Nichtige on the other. Across the boundary there is the primordial chaos, and together with it, sorrow, failure, sin, disease, and the last enemy, death. Barth's critique of the existentialist development of this concept in his colleague Karl Jaspers is well-known.⁵ The Barthian must deny the boundary-situation as an occasion for God's address to man, because the concept of the boundary-situation is part of a "natural theology." If the boundary-situation is a need in man, of which he is aware, and to which the gospel provides the answer, then it is a kind of knowledge

³Marty, "Problems And Possibilities In Bonhoeffer's Thought," p. 19; Robinson, Honest To God, p. 104, footnote 1.

⁴See e.g. Morley, Fenton, "Reactions In The Church Of England," The Honest To God Debate, p. 47.

⁵See Church Dogmatics, III/2, especially pp. 113-128.

of God in man which precedes the coming of the gospel. In Bonhoeffer's phrase, such boundary-situations understood as religious needs are "God-shaped blanks" in man's soul. Negative and ambiguous as they are, they are nevertheless a kind of rudimentary knowledge of God and His gospel which comes to fill them. The "shape" of the need conditions the shape of the remedy. If no natural theology is possible, and if the law cannot precede the gospel, then the gospel cannot be understood as addressed to the boundary situations of human life.

While this is without a doubt Bonhoeffer's final view and while it is wholly consistent with his Barthian position as a whole and his program of "religionless" Christianity, he did sometimes speak of the boundary-situation affirmatively. Before proceeding to a more careful study of this final position, we should note the exceptions. He could speak of hopelessness as one such boundary-situation, another as meaninglessness, and still a third as the destiny of man under the curse of Eden.⁶

In his early works he could write,

where the power of man has lapsed entirely, where man knows his own weakness, sinfulness, and consequently the judgment of God upon him, just there God is already working in grace...just and exactly there and only there is forgiveness, justification, restoration...There, at the very limits of man(an den äußersten Begrenzungen

⁶Letters And Papers From Prison, respectively, pp. 126, 130, 153. In the third of these he wrote that this destiny under "the dark shadow of the wrath of God" should drive men to call upon God and should remind them of "their eternal destiny in his kingdom."

des Menschen) stands God, and when man can do nothing more, then God does all.⁷

One could hardly find a clearer statement of the gospel directed to the boundary-situations of man than that! In the same year (1931), he wrote that man's "limitations" lie exactly "where God's work begins."⁸ God's work does not then begin as a continuation of man's highest spiritual accomplishments, but at man's limits, e.g. sin and death.⁹

Even in his Ethics he could speak in this way. In his discussion of the penultimate, he declared,

it is precisely to the depths of downfall, of guilt and of misery, that God stoops down in Jesus Christ; that precisely the dispossessed, the humiliated and the exploited, are especially near to the justice and mercy of God; that it is to the undisciplined that Jesus Christ offers His help and His strength; and that the truth is ready to set upon firm ground those who stray and despair.¹⁰

However, the repudiation of religion as the answer to boundary-situations of human life was the final position to which Bonhoeffer came. We will not repeat here what has already been said above under the title, The World Come Of Age, except briefly to describe the position reached. The

⁷"Concerning The Christian Idea Of God," p. 109, German translation, p. 531.

⁸One is reminded of Luther's striking saying, Where man's power begins, God's power ends; Only where man's power ends, can God's power begin in him. Paraphrase based on The Magnificat, LW 21, p. 340.

⁹"The Theology Of Crisis And Its Attitude Toward Philosophy And Science,"

¹⁰p. 115.

Ethics, pp. 93-95.

Christian religion has traditionally seen itself as the answer to certain specific human religious needs. It has been a generally accepted understanding that the gospel is proclaimed to the destitute and the despairing, to sinners who have been brought to repentance. However, man come of age is no longer preoccupied with God and salvation. All the while, the assumption persists in the Church that man is filled with anxiety and that it is to this need that the gospel is addressed. Above all there remain ultimate questions of guilt and death to which only God can provide the answer.

By increasingly confining itself to these questions, the faith is self-defeating, for it rests on the presupposition that helplessness is an enduring trait of human nature. Actually, Bonhoeffer contended, this is not true at all. Man come of age has become increasingly self-reliant, getting along very nicely without God.

Christianity's main concern is not to "save souls," and it is certainly not to bring men to despair so that it can afterwards save them from it. The boundary-situation is not to be understood as God's opportunity, human weakness and sinfulness as the occasion for salvation. To teach this is to relegate God to the boundary-situations on the periphery of life and to abandon and desert the center of life to other forces. In this way Christ ceases being the Lord of all the world.¹¹ In addition the Church seeks to save a place for the gospel by contesting the world's coming of age, insisting that the world cannot go on without God as its completion. This means however that the world is no longer taken seriously as come of age.¹² Once

¹¹See the excellent summary in Ebersole, pp. 59-73, 180.

¹²Prenter, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer und Karl Barths Offenbarungspositivismus," pp. 15-16.

again it is very difficult to essay precisely what Bonhoeffer meant by his attack upon the gospel directed to the boundary-situations of man. Certainly his attack is altogether justified in so far as the Church has "accommodated" itself to the world come of age by "restricting" the gospel to the ultimate questions.¹³ In so far as the Church has abandoned and deserted the center of life to others, it is deserving of condemnation.

He was also certainly correct when he said that this procedure is to "use" God as a deus ex machina,¹⁴ to use Him as an instrument, as a means to an end. To confine God to the boundary-situations of human life is to make Him "an object of religion." The opposite of this "use" of God is to treat Him as what He is, "the Lord of the world."¹⁵ God is not to be regarded as some kind of "power over the world" laid into man's hands. He is not to be utilized as a Helper who appears only as the completion of human powerlessness, in order to transform it into human power.¹⁶ G. Ebeling contends that Bonhoeffer's definition of the "religion" he so forcefully opposed was the completion (*Ergänzung*) of reality through God. The world come of age might then be defined as the maturity of the world without God. If this maturity of the world without God were actually affirmed without reservation by Bonhoeffer's position, Ebeling says, no further Christian proclamation would be possible. If man is really mature without God, Bonhoeffer's question about how to address such a world with the gospel would be an absurdity. Modern man come of age is mature without God, he no long-

¹³Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 114.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 122.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁶Prenter, "Bonhoeffer und der junge Luther," pp. 40-42, 45.

er needs God as the completion of his life, the compensation for his weakness. But this new maturity without God can only be lived "before God."¹⁷

Nevertheless, there are certain persistent questions which cannot lightly be brushed aside. Has the man who inhabits die mündige Welt, modern autonomous man who has outgrown his dependence on God, really ceased being a sinner, burst the limitations of his finitude, ceased being mortal?¹⁸ A. Richardson declares there are no "religionless" men in this sense, and R.G. Smith that there are certain quite inescapable boundaries which lie across the path of human life.¹⁹

Other writers contend that modern man is far from mature in his self-reliance and point to the persistent themes of despair and the absolute meaninglessness of human life which are sounded in so much contemporary literature.²⁰ D. Jenkins points out that along with modern man's mastery over the world and life, there has been a growth in his self-awareness, so that in many ways he seeks religion as the answer to some of the most profound questions in life quite as much as ancient man did.²¹

J. Richmond finds the clue to what is wrong in Bonhoeffer's position in his "caricature" of the existentialist theologians. He finds it "incredible" that in his Letters And Papers From Prison he should identify them with those who pry into the private lives of people in order to convince them of their anxiety, guilt, despair, etc. from which God will deliver them. This caricature is so extreme, Richmond concludes that Bonhoeffer's Barthian

¹⁷Ebeling, pp. 60-67, 72.

¹⁸Hanson, R.P.C., "Review," The Honest To God Debate, p. 110.

¹⁹Richardson, "God: Our Search Or His?" p. 14; Smith, p. 58.

²⁰Mac Intyre, "God And The Theologians," p. 223; Lawrence, p. 161.

²¹Jenkins, "Religion And Coming Of Age," pp. 211-213.

anti-religion, anti-"natural theology" presuppositions prevented him from any appreciation for existentialist theology. It is precisely the value of such theology that it shows that man's anxiety, guilt, despair, etc. are experiences in which he sees dimensions in life which ordinarily escape his notice. He is forced by these experiences to question about the meaning of his life and to ask other fundamental "religious" questions. This saves existentialist theology from making the mistake Bonhoeffer commits, in Richmond's view, in making modern man's "superficial self-understanding" conclusive and normative for theology.²²

Certainly the "natural theology" of the existentialist theologians is unacceptable to the Barthians. We have already noted Barth's position on Jaspers' work.²³ In one place Barth contends that the boundary-situations of the war years did not appear to bring men any closer to God. In any case, Bonhoeffer's "religionless" man is a thoroughly Barthian concept. Both Bultmann and Tillich have moved away from Barth on this issue.

The difference between the Barthians and Tillich on this issue has its background in Barth's denial of the possibility of any natural theology. Here he stands in the neo-Kantian tradition of the Ritschlians.²⁴ Tillich points out that the Barthian rejection of apologetic and natural theology rests on the belief that if the "question" can be asked by man apart from the gospel, if he has a "God-shaped blank" in his soul, this means that the gospel is taken captive by the "situation." The gospel is not the answer

²²Richmond, pp. 39-40.

²³Church Dogmatics, III/2, especially pp. 113-128.

²⁴Siegfried, Theodore, "The Significance Of Paul Tillich's Theology For The German Situation, "The Theology Of Paul Tillich, Eds. Kegley, C.W. and Bretall, R.W., New York, 1952, p. 73.

to questions in the human situation, and Barth can say that the gospel must be thrown like a stone.²⁵ Contrariwise, Tillich contends that Biblical religion is addressed to quite specific needs in man. He insists that if man is really incapable of asking the question of God, as the Barthians teach, then there is no possibility of his receiving the gospel in Jesus Christ. There could be no point of contact between man and the gospel at all. The latter would be wholly irrelevant to the human situation. Barth's famous "No" against any kind of natural theology is in the last analysis a "self-deception."²⁶

Thus Tillich very definitely believes that man has a "God-shaped blank" in his soul. Rather than emphasizing contemporary man as come of age, he pictures him as very much "afraid of the dark." Man cannot escape God, because his life is constantly invaded by guilt, suffering, doubt, meaninglessness, despair. These are quite inescapable and they drive man beyond himself to God. If Christian apologetic does not proclaim the gospel "to the doubts, the longings, and the questions" of contemporary man, it is entirely inadequate to the hour. In this sense Tillich claims that this "religionless" man is an outdated Barthian position. Richmond concludes that theological advance will depend on rejection of Bonhoeffer's conception of man come of age as "religionless" man.²⁷

There is an even more serious criticism which must be brought against the conception of "religionless" man, for whom the boundary-situations no

²⁵Systematic Theology, I, pp. 6-7.

²⁶Ibid., I, pp. 153, 155; II, p. 16; Downing, F.G., "Review," The Honest To God Debate, p. 131.

²⁷Richmond, pp. 40-42, 46.

longer exist. It is that of M. Ebersole. He writes, granted that since the renaissance and Aufklärung man has learned a certain self-sufficiency and granted that the question of saving one's soul apparently holds little interest for contemporary man, it is simply not true that he no longer asks about the ultimate direction and meaning of his life. If he has indeed achieved such self-mastery and self-sufficiency that he no longer asks about the ultimate direction and meaning of his life, what basis would there be for him to identify himself with the sufferings of the world? The man whom Bonhoeffer described as no longer "needing" God is no longer a man who could see any meaning in the cross of Christ. If neither guilt nor death are genuine boundaries any longer, what possible meaning, what possible relevance, could the crucifixion of Jesus Christ have to man today? Why should such a man endure persecution or martyrdom, if he is no longer concerned about the ultimate direction and purpose of his life and indeed of human life? If man come of age cannot take forgiveness and salvation seriously, how can he be expected to take the form of Christ, who suffered and died for the sin of mankind, seriously as the form into which all human life should grow? Where is the point of contact to be found in contemporary man for a gospel of suffering, if he has indeed "come of age."²⁸

This criticism is not intended to obscure the great service Bonhoeffer has performed for theology in his restatement of the doctrine of the cross of the Christian and in all the questions posed by his conception of the world come of age. However, the conception and the language in which it is conveyed to us are at best fragmentary and therefore ambiguous. This

²⁸Ebersole, pp. 178-181.

explains why Barth has cautioned against using such enigmatic and still fragmentary writing as a foundation upon which to build. Barth's assessment is significant, for it appears to this writer that Bonhoeffer was involved in attempting to do the impossible, at one time to go beyond Barth and yet to remain loyal to him. Such an attempt was bound to fail and it did.

Bonhoeffer was tied in a Barthian knot. He criticized Barth for what he called his Offenbarungspositivismus in which the gospel is addressed to the world in a way which is irrelevant to its concerns, with a certain take it or leave it attitude. He wished to avoid this "positivism," and thus speak relevantly to modern man, and yet remain a consistent Barthian. He denied the opus alienum Dei, and while he spoke of Anfechtung, the law, and the cross of the Christian, he discussed them as part of a "Christological" conformitas Christi and in no sense as a part of an opus alienum Dei. In addition he denied the possibility of natural theology in which the gospel is understood as the "answer" to the boundary-situations of human life. The entire, elaborate construction of die mündige Welt complex of ideas was an attempt to escape an Offenbarungspositivismus. But since this complex of ideas has no more point of contact with the "needs" of people than does the Barthian position he sought to avoid, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that he was as guilty of "Positivism of Revelation" as his mentor. If Barth is guilty of Offenbarungspositivismus, Bonhoeffer is not less so. It is perfectly true he sought to go beyond Barth with his "concreteness of revelation" and Arkandisziplin, but as we have already noted, if there is no point of contact between the gospel and man come of age, why should man accept the cross laid upon his shoulders or the yoke of the Ar-

kandisziplin? Little wonder then that Barth was singularly unimpressed with Letters And Papers From Prison, as enigmatic utterances, and, as an absolutely consistent theologian, looked askance at this young theologian's attempt both to go beyond Barth and to remain a Barthian.

From the point of view consistently developed in this study, Bonhoeffer could have avoided this pitfall by giving a place to the conception of the opus alienum Dei in his theology. This would have meant discarding the denial of "natural theology," substituting the sequence law and gospel for that of gospel and law, affirming an opus alienum Dei by which God mortifies the old man in order to prepare the way for His opus proprium of love and forgiveness, and recognizing the gospel as great good news to all the abiding spiritual needs of human life.

Most theologians find it quite easy to agree with Bonhoeffer's rejection of a religion which makes the gospel an answer to the boundary-situations of human life, in so far as this makes God and the gospel "means" in the hands of men. It is quite another matter, however, when this conception is coupled with another idea in Letters And Papers From Prison which receives much less attention from the scholars, but which is ultimately as important. This is the idea that Christianity is not essentially a religion of salvation.

Having denied that the gospel is addressed to the boundary-situations of human life, it was perfectly natural and altogether logical to deny it as a religion of salvation altogether. Bonhoeffer contended that an "individualistic concern for personal salvation" had pretty well left contemporary man and that as such the matter was largely irrelevant to life today.

In Letters And Papers From Prison he proceeded to argue that this was the Biblical view as well. He wrote, in the Old Testament there is no concern about saving one's soul, the concern is centered in this life, not the next.²⁹ The Old Testament is not a religion of salvation. It is concerned with historical redemption, while myths of salvation are essentially concerned with delivering men from death. As such the latter take the historical less seriously in the interest of centering concern in the eternal after death. Not even the emphasis of the New Testament on the resurrection makes it a religion of salvation. The resurrection in the New Testament is intended to send the Christian back into life in this world newly inspired and empowered. It does not mean "release" from this world, "salvation from cares and need, from fear and longing, from sin and death into a better world beyond the grave." The Christian ought not to need a refuge in the eternal from the tasks and difficulties of earthly life.³⁰

As a fitting conclusion to Bonhoeffer's thinking on this question there is this passage which stands near the end of Letters And Papers From Prison:

Atonement and redemption, regeneration, the Holy Ghost, the love of our enemies, the cross and resurrection, life in Christ and Christian discipleship, all these things have become so problematic and so remote that we hardly dare any more to speak of them...

We are groping after something new and revolutionary

²⁹Letters And Papers From Prison, pp. 94-95.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 112-113.

without being able to understand it or utter it yet.³¹

Indeed where Christianity ceases being a religion of salvation, all its teachings become "problematic" and "remote."³²

Is the faith of the Bible really "religionless" in the sense in which Bonhoeffer contended it was? At the beginning of His ministry, in the synagogue at Nazareth, our Lord took the following as the theme of that ministry. He

opened the book and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord...' And he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' (Luke 4:17-21)

When one turns to the Pauline epistles and asks, from what does Christ "save," the answer is clear enough, from the "Tyrants:" sin, the law, the flesh, the world, death. If Bonhoeffer was concerned that the gospel not be dealt with as a Word addressed to boundary-situations, the Scripture shows little evidence of this concern of Barthian theology. For the gospel is there proclaimed as "good news" precisely because it comes to those in bondage to the "Tyrants" and proclaims deliverance and release.

³¹Letters And Papers From Prison, p. 160.

³²However, Bonhoeffer could speak of his personal faith in these terms: "My past life is replete with God's goodness, and my sins are covered by the forgiving love of Christ crucified. Ibid., p. 131. See Ebeling, p. 64.

In the Scripture the crucial questions are those of guilt and righteousness, of slavery and freedom, of death and resurrection. When Bonhoeffer contended that the gospel ought not to be understood principally as an answer to the boundary-situations of human life, he superimposed a uniquely twentieth century question on the Scripture and spoke of a gospel other than the gospel of the Scripture.³³

If the world has come of age, so that man no longer needs God to deal with the Tyrants, no longer needs to be saved, why cannot man learn this for himself altogether apart from Christ? What dependence upon or need for the gospel remains?

Bonhoeffer complained that God had been relegated to the boundary-situations at the periphery of life, that the "center" had been abandoned to the world. The implication is that this is because of some failure of the Church. It can be argued, however, that it is precisely die mündige Welt which has put Him there. It has done this by shifting the "religious questions" or "religious needs" from the hub of life to the boundary. It is not that man's religious needs are at the periphery of life, but that the contemporary Weltanschauung has set them at the boundary. Barth has said, it is not that the world has come of age to some sort of post-religious stage, but that it has come to regard itself so.³⁴ In this sense the autonomy of the world come of age is its "misunderstanding of itself."³⁵ In the same context, E.L. Mascall has written that Christianity can be relevant to modern, secular man only by persuading him that he must no longer

³³See Wingren, Creation And Law, p. 177; Theology In Conflict, pp. 26-27.

³⁴Marty, "Bonhoeffer: Seminarians' Theologian," p. 469.

³⁵The phrase is Daniel Jenkins', Beyond Religion, p. 80.

be secular. If Bonhoeffer is right in saying that God is teaching men today that they can get along very well without Him, the Church has no need to proclaim this message, "for that is precisely what secularized man already believes."³⁶

A. Richardson contends that there are no "religionless" men, but only "those who do not know the name of Him" who has made them for Himself.³⁷ It is the contemporary world-view which shields Him from their sight. It is this world-view ^{which} makes a deus ex machina of Him. The existential needs remain, but this world-view forbids man to look to God for help with them. The contemporary view compels him to look to himself for the answers, and when he does and the answers are not forthcoming, there follows that anxiety, that gnawing meaninglessness which is one of the marks of contemporary man.

Rather than being called to an affirmation of this world-view, designating it, "come of age," as Bonhoeffer did, it would seem that the Church is called today to launch a prophetic critique of this world-view which has succeeded so in displacing God from the center of life.

In conclusion, theology owes Dietrich Bonhoeffer a debt of gratitude, first for his restatement of the doctrine of the cross of the Christian, sealed with his life. There is a rich doctrine of mortification in his work, this in spite of the fact that he did not speak of Anfechtung, the law, or the cross of the Christian as part of the opus alienum Dei. They

³⁶Mascall, E.L., "Review," The Honest To God Debate, pp. 92-93; Richardson, "God: His Search Or Ours?" p. 7.

³⁷Ibid., p. 14.

are seen "Christologically" as conformitas Christi. Second, the complex of ideas centered in the phrase, die mündige Welt, raises the most profound questions for Christian apologetics. Bonhoeffer did not successfully answer the questions, but he asked them in such a way that they cannot be evaded. His last work is too fragmentary and ambiguous to provide us with satisfying answers to the questions it raises. Barth's caution here ought to be followed by all. Of his last work, he said, Bonhoeffer was "impulsive" and "visionary," moving from one "provisional" position to another.

Bonhoeffer's attempt to avoid what he called the Offenbarungspositivismus of Barth and yet remain a consistent Barthian must be judged a failure. His denial of the possibility of natural theology, the opus alienum Dei, and the gospel as an "answer" to the religious "needs" of human life are of a piece and belong as much to a Positivism of Revelation as anything he criticized in Barth. He did not see this. His program of an Arkandisziplin, of identification with the Crucified, in "being-there" for the world to bear its suffering, is deeply moving and certainly worthy of adoption, but it is not likely to evoke much response from the world, if it is indeed as post-religious as he claimed. He provided us with little theological foundation upon which to build, but the questions he has left us will haunt contemporary theology for a long time.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study began with the modern restatement of mortification to be found in the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Consideration of his work led back to Luther, and to a far richer doctrine of mortification and the opus alienum Dei than in any of the theologians we have studied. We noted that this comes in the nature of a discovery to the modern reader. We asked why this should be so and set out to trace the course of the doctrine from Luther to Bonhoeffer.

LUTHER

Luther rediscovered the Biblical realism of God's work with man. He described the figure of the God who kills and who makes alive. His doctrine of the opus alienum and opus proprium Dei, effecting mortification and vivification, was his way of underscoring the initiative and activity of God in the salvation of man. However, for all his emphasis on the "objective" side of his dialectic, underscoring the activity of God, Luther knew this "work" of God took place in a genuine encounter with man through His Word. This encounter may be termed the "subjective" half of his dialectic.

His dialectical mode of expression insured "giving God the glory" for His work in man and at the same time understanding it as a real work which takes place in man's life. This is perhaps very obvious, but it needs to be repeated because subsequent Lutheranism did not maintain it. The result was a more "objective" or a more "subjective" understanding of the doctrine, but nowhere the dialectical understanding of Luther.

The center of his theology here was his dialectic of the wrath of God/love of God, opus alienum/opus proprium Dei, Anfechtung/faith, law/gospel, cross/resurrection, old man/new man, death/life. This "work" of God, Luther taught, continues in the Christian because he is simul justus et peccator. The opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei continue side by side in him daily and throughout his earthly life.

MELANCHTHON

Philipp Melanchthon, in seeking to preserve the sola gratia, set out to do so by deemphasizing all the "subjective" factors in its reception. He reasoned that it was only by the introduction of "subjective" factors into the process that the sola gratia could be compromised. Thus he excluded the "subjective" factors belonging to Christian "experience" from consideration, and relied on the "certainty" of the reine Lehre. In doing so he set out upon a course which Luther would never have taken and set up a whole collection of other problems which have been the heritage of Lutheran theology ever since.

In this way he lost the "subjective" half of Luther's dialectic, the sense of "immediacy" with which Luther regarded the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei, and in fact led the way to an obscuring of the opus alienum Dei altogether.

We noted that his motivation was different from Luther's. First he feared that the reformation would end in Barbarei and therefore gave Lutheranism its didactic form and made the indoctrination of believers in the reine Lehre very important. Second he wished consolation of the conscience to be so firmly ("objectively") grounded that it could in no way be open to

question, as we have noted. The latter had the effect of obscuring the simul justus et peccator and therefore the dialectic of opus alienum/opus proprium Dei, Anfechtung/faith, law/gospel, cross/resurrection. Melanchthon desired to hurry through Anfechtung, the second use of the law, and the cross of the Christian to get to the "certainty" of the state of grace. As a result, the first and third of these themes fell into disuse.

It is not difficult to see why the conception of the opus alienum Dei fell into disuse. It is specifically its purpose to disturb, unsettle, and destroy. The opus alienum Dei is directed to the spiritual security of man, and it is the purpose of Anfechtung, the second use of the law, and the cross of the Christian to destroy that security, demonstrate to man his need for the gospel, and therefore prepare for grace. Melanchthon's eagerness to get to the opus proprium Dei as quickly as possible is the key here. This was "cheap grace" and the result was that Luther's important doctrine of the opus alienum Dei did not survive the second generation of Lutheran theologians.

SPENER

The reaction to this theology pretended to completing the reformation, but in reality it was wholly conditioned by the Orthodoxy against which it reacted. The conception of the opus alienum Dei, obscured in Orthodoxy, was not restored, but simply obscured in another way. Where Orthodoxy had adopted the "objective" half of Luther's dialectic, in order to make the faith unassailable in the "objectivity" of its reine Lehre, Pietism called this a "dead" faith and sought a living faith by recovering the dimension of

Christian "experience." Thus two of the major themes of this study, fallen in disuse in Orthodoxy: Anfechtung and the cross of the Christian, were recovered by Pietism.

The new emphasis shifted the center from justification to the Wiedergeburt. The important themes became: quantitative sanctification, renunciation of the earthly, striving for perfection, "proving" your Wiedergeburt by evidence of the fruits of faith, culminating in "certainty" of salvation. Pietism was preoccupied with mortification. However, it did not recover the doctrine of the opus alienum Dei, so that the themes: Anfechtung, the law, and the cross of the Christian were interpreted in an anthropocentric way as a part of the "practice" of the Christian life.

The concepts of justification and faith were displaced by Wiedergeburt and piety. In the place of the simul justus et peccator, Pietism understood the ordo salutis as progressive sanctification. Where Luther had held the theocentric conception of the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei, Pietism, in effect, took this "work" into its own hands with its scheme for the "practice" of the Christian life. In Luther's view, it is God as "subject" of the opus alienum and the opus proprium who gives unity to the whole. In Pietism, it is the growth in sanctification of the individual Christian which gives continuity and unity to the process.

In a word, the doctrine of mortification was restored to importance by Pietism, but the doctrine of the opus alienum Dei was not recovered. Anfechtung, the second use of the law, and the cross of the Christian, through which the opus alienum Dei is effected, were subsumed under the opus proprium Dei. Pietism carried the loss of the opus alienum Dei and the anthro-

pocentrizing of the whole another step along.

RITSCHL

Pietism already belonged to the "new age." It was a transitional movement from the more pessimistic reformation view of man to the more optimistic view of the Aufklärung. The theology of Albrecht Ritschl, in that there was a conscious return to Kant underlying his work, clearly indicates the direction taken by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries regarding the doctrine of mortification and the opus alienum Dei.

Following the Kantian epistemology, Ritschl limited what could be known in theology to the phenomenal and this resulted in much reduced versions of Biblical doctrines. It meant that nothing could be said in theology from the standpoint of God and His work, but theology could only be written from the standpoint of that which man knows in his own experience.

In Lutheran Orthodoxy, one hurried past the opus alienum Dei to get to the consolation of the gospel as quickly as possible. In Pietism one finds the opus alienum Dei subsumed under the opus proprium. Ritschl followed the Aufklärung in dismissing the conception of the opus alienum Dei altogether. Like it, he could find nothing in man toward which an opus alienum should be directed. The conception of the "wrath" of God, His "judicial" nature, was made to give place to the "Fatherhood" of God. Therefore no movement from wrath to grace was possible in God, the only "change" possible occurs in man, from regarding God as wrathful to recognizing His Fatherhood. Justification became the removal of the "consciousness" of guilt. Also, Abelard's rather than Anselm's view of the atonement was held by Ritschl. In essence

the atonement became a matter of the imitatio Christi.

It is a theology which denied the doctrine of original sin, ostensibly because it could not be verified in experience, but more fundamentally because it could not be reconciled with the optimistic Aufklärung view of man. The autonomy of man and what he could do for his own salvation comprised the heart of this theology. The Aufklärung triad of God, virtue, and immortality returned in Ritschl as the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the supreme worth of the human soul.

In such a theology as this there is neither a doctrine of mortification nor a conception of the opus alienum Dei. There is nothing to be mortified, and, in fact, an opus Dei is epistemologically precluded. Without the conception of the opus alienum Dei, the themes of Anfechtung, the second use of the law, and the cross of the Christian are quite meaningless.

Where the optimistic Aufklärung view of man is held, the conception of the opus alienum Dei is unreasonable. It has no object in man toward which it may be directed. In addition, where the work of God is not understood as something real outside of and apart from man, the dialectic of the wrath of God/love of God, opus alienum/opus proprium Dei, old man/new man, Anfechtung/faith, law/gospel, cross/resurrection of the Christian is meaningless and cannot be held. In fact, it is not too much to say that the conception of the opus alienum Dei is a stumbling block to all such anthropocentric interpretations of Christianity as this.

BONHOEFFER

The work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer belongs to the Barthian movement.

Otherwise in reaction against nineteenth century theology, there is one remarkable continuity between it and that theology which was fundamental to Bonhoeffer's work. This was Barth's denial of natural theology which goes back through Ritschl to Kant. In the form of it which concerns us here, this is the denial of any "boundary-situations" in man to which the gospel is addressed. Here is the background for Bonhoeffer's contention that modern man has come of age, that is, outgrown his "need" for God. He wrote that we have come to a time of no religion at all and that the Church dare no longer address its message to the "religious premise" in man.

The fundamental question he set out to answer was, how can Christ become the Lord even of those with no religion? His answer was "religionless Christianity," living without God, "before God." Let the Church exercise an arcane discipline of suffering for and service to the world for which Christ died. In this way let the Church demonstrate God's "being-for" the world, in Word, Sacrament, and Congregation.

Bonhoeffer restored the doctrines of mortification and the cross of the Christian to prominence once again. However, these are understood "Christologically." They take place when man is conformed to the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ. Neither mortification, Anfechtung, the law, nor the cross of the Christian were understood as belonging to the opus alienum Dei. The latter must be excluded from their theology by Barth and Bonhoeffer, because its use would involve natural theology.

What of Bonhoeffer's conception of the world come of age? If what was meant was that modern man has become more autonomous and self-reliant than his forebearers, there is nothing new in that. If what was meant was that

modern man no longer possesses the "needs" for God men knew in the past, this is more open to question. As a Barthian, Bonhoeffer was compelled to deny that the gospel is addressed to the boundary situations of human life: sin, guilt, anxiety, meaninglessness, death, etc., or admit to natural theology. However, has modern man ceased being a sinner? Does he no longer seek a purpose for human life? Is he no longer mortal? If modern man has really outgrown any "needs" to which the gospel speaks, why would he be inclined to follow the program outlined in the rest of Bonhoeffer's theology? Why would he bear a cross like Christ's participating in the sufferings of the world?

Bonhoeffer's denial that the gospel speaks to the spiritual needs of man, and his denial of an opus alienum Dei, the very purpose of which is to point up and clarify man's "need" for God, makes him just as guilty of Offenbarungspositivismus as Barth is. This Offenbarungspositivismus, this lack of an apologetic, could have been avoided by the doctrine of the opus alienum Dei. It is an important part of Christian apologetics today to proclaim the opus alienum Dei in such a way that modern man may see the work of God's "left hand" and that of His "right hand" active in human life and history, though obscured for the present by the contemporary world view.

It remains for us to trace the course of each of the four central themes of this study.

MORTIFICATION

Luther rediscovered the Biblical realism describing God's work with men. He spoke of the God who kills and who makes alive. The doctrine of mortification is very important to his theology, because he was convinced no one could hear the gospel aright who had not first known the opus alienum Dei. In His opus alienum, God takes the whole of nature and history into His hands and uses it to effect mortification in men.

Superficially, Melancthon appears simply to repeat Luther's doctrine of mortification, however, his desire that peace of conscience be as "objectively" grounded as possible led, in effect, to hurrying through mortification to get to the state of grace as quickly as possible. Lutheran Orthodoxy followed this lead, mortification became little more than a brief prelude to what Bonhoeffer has called "cheap grace," and the conception of the opus alienum Dei fell into disuse altogether.

Pietism restored the doctrine of mortification to prominence, in fact, it may be said to have been preoccupied with mortification. However, it was a mortification to be "practiced" as a part of the practice of the Christian life and not a mortification effected by the opus alienum Dei. The latter conception was not recovered but rather was obscured, together with that of the wrath of God, behind the opus proprium Dei and the love of God.

Where Orthodoxy had hurried from mortification and the opus alienum Dei to the opus proprium Dei as quickly as possible, and where Pietism had simply subsumed the opus alienum Dei under His opus proprium, Ritschl followed the Aufklärung in dismissing the conceptions of the wrath of God, mortifi-

cation, and the opus alienum Dei altogether. The reason was that neither Ritschl nor the Aufklärung could find anything in man toward which an opus alienum Dei should be directed. There is really nothing in man to be mortified. The only way in which mortification may be spoken of is as moral self-discipline.

Bonhoeffer's theology restored the doctrine of mortification to a position of prominence, however, it was construed "Christologically," as part of a conformation to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. This mortification is not effected by an opus alienum Dei, for the latter would require a "natural theology" to complement it.

Thus while a place has been found for the doctrine of mortification among some of his followers, it has not been seen as part of an opus alienum Dei and in fact the doctrine of the opus alienum Dei itself has not meaningfully been held since Luther.

ANFECHTUNG

Luther used the term Anfechtung for those assaults upon faith which arise from doubt, persecution, and suffering in human life. He regarded it as a part of the work of God by which the old man is mortified and man prepared for the reception of grace. Both the term and its content appear to have proved awkward for his followers, none of whom preserved the conception of the opus alienum Dei.

Melanchthon preferred the term, "terrors of conscience," made these little more than a prelude to the reception of grace, and desired to leave them behind as quickly as possible for peace of conscience. As a result,

the dialectic of Anfechtung/faith fell very quickly into disuse in Lutheran Orthodoxy.

Pietism sought to recover this doctrine, but failed. It preferred the term, Versuchung, which obscures its divine authorship. This was consistent with the fact that Anfechtung was "chosen," in that, its "practice" of sanctification and its desire to "prove" the Wiedergeburt produced Anfechtungen in its members. Such Anfechtungen found their cause in the "practice" of Pietism and not in the opus alienum Dei.

The conception of Anfechtung does not appear in Ritschl's theology because it was inconsistent with his conception of God and his conception of man. He saw Luther's experience of it as psychologically abnormal and declared that this abnormality ought not to be made normative for others.

Bonhoeffer spoke of Versuchung, but he did not really seek to restore the conception of Anfechtung. In so far as the conception appears in his theology, it is treated "Christologically," as a part of conformity to Christ. Bonhoeffer regarded such experiences as involving great risks to spiritual life, denied the dialectic Anfechtung/faith, and refused to consider them as a necessary part of the work of God. This position was held because the conception of the opus alienum Dei was expressly denied.

It would appear that a genuine recovery of Luther's conception of Anfechtung will be left to the "existentialist" theologians who are not afraid of a natural theology and who still believe men possess spiritual "needs" to which the gospel is addressed.

THE LAW

The dialectic of law/gospel was central to Luther's theology. His formulation of the simul justus et peccator underlay his understanding of the alteration of law and gospel in the continuous rhythm of the Christian life.

By introducing the conception of the third use of the law, Melancthon obscured Luther's strong emphasis on the second use of the law as a "Tyrant." Emphasis was placed on the function of the law as a guide for the Christian life and comparatively less emphasis on its function as part of the opus alienum Dei by which He destroys spiritual pride and security and prepares a man for grace.

In Pietism the third use of the law clearly predominates over the second use. Sanctification and "proof" of one's Wiedergeburt can only take place according to the third use of the law. The latter is far more open to a human subject than is the second use which can really only be understood as exercised by God. In addition, the careful distinction Luther made between law and gospel was obscured. Spener taught that the law and the wrath and judgment of God were to be subsumed under the gospel and His love and forgiveness. Spener ended by teaching that mortification was effected by the gospel. In this way the conception of the opus alienum Dei was emptied of its meaning.

Ritschl rejected the second use of the law because, like the Aufklärung, he could conceive of nothing in man to which it might be directed. He taught instead the third use of the law of gradual education and growth in virtue. Like the Pietists, he taught that the law proceeds from the gospel and is to be subsumed under it. This is consistent with his rejection of the opus

alienum Dei.

Thus Luther's dialectic of law/gospel has not been maintained. It's meaning was not totally obscured during the duration of the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy, but in all the more "modern" periods of Pietism, the Aufklärung and nineteenth century theology, and contemporary theology, the law has generally been subsumed under the gospel and the emphasis fallen on its third use.

THE CROSS OF THE CHRISTIAN

Luther taught a rich doctrine of the cross of the Christian, underscoring the distinctly Christian cross of persecution as one of the marks of the true Church. He insisted it could not be a chosen or self-inflicted cross, as the monastics were inclined to seek, but that it was a part of the opus alienum Dei by which He conformed men to the death and resurrection of His Son.

The doctrine of the cross of the Christian was repeated in the work of Melancthon. However, when the conception of the opus alienum Dei fell into disuse, the doctrine of the cross of the Christian was given a much reduced place in the theological systems of Lutheran Orthodoxy until it disappeared altogether. It belonged too much to the sphere of Christian "experience" to be given a very large place in the "objective" theology of Orthodoxy. The emphasis was on the cross of Christ and its sufficiency for the salvation of man, and, so that this might not be compromised in any way, the conception of the cross of the Christian was deemphasized and gradually lost altogether.

"Conformity" to Christ was very important in Pietism. The doctrine of the cross of the Christian was therefore recovered, together with other aspects of Christian "experience." In fact, bearing the cross of the Christian patiently became one of the marks of "proving" one's Wiedergeburt. However, where Luther saw "conformity" to the cross of Christ to be an effect of the opus alienum Dei, Pietism sought the cross as an imitatio Christi.

Ritschl possessed no doctrine of the cross of the Christian of any kind. He considered the sufferings of life to be either "punishments" or "educative" depending entirely on how they were regarded by the subject. Such a "cross" of the Christian could in no way be regarded as a part of an opus alienum Dei.

In the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the doctrine of the cross of the Christian came to a new prominence. Like Luther, he taught that the cross of the Christian was one of the marks of the true Church, that its essential nature is persecution for the cause of Christ, and that it could never be chosen. However, unlike Luther, his doctrine of the cross was defined "Christologically," as part of conformity to Christ, but not included in an opus alienum Dei.

This recovery of the doctrine of the cross of the Christian in Bonhoeffer leaves the matter at an awkward place, for if natural theology is to be avoided at all costs and if modern man has come of age in such a way that he no longer possesses spiritual needs to which the gospel speaks, then there is really no reason to believe that he would willingly bear the sufferings of the world participating in the cross of Christ.

This thesis began with Bonhoeffer and ends with Luther, even though according to the table of contents the sequence moves the other way. None of the Lutheran theologians we have studied has succeeded in recapturing the real genius of his theology. We end concurring with Philip Watson that to turn to the theology of Luther is not to go back, but to go forward to a position which has never fully been reached. At the conclusion of this study we consider the thesis of Regin Prenter, that Lutheranism has never been Lutheran, to be proved in regard to the doctrine of mortification and the opus alienum Dei.

Luther's theology of the opus alienum and the opus proprium Dei was meant to underscore the Biblical doctrine of the initiative and activity of God in the salvation of mankind. The specific task of the opus alienum Dei is to aid man, entrapped in the delusion of his self-sufficiency, to know his need for God and the gospel. Only when men know that need does the gospel of Jesus Christ speak relevantly to their lives.

This is pointed up by paraphrasing a striking saying of Luther's,

where man's power begins,

God's power ends,

only where man's power ends,

can God's power begin in him.¹

Here the purpose of the opus alienum Dei is very clearly sounded, to teach men their need for God. This conflicts fundamentally with the conception

¹Based on The Magnificat, LW 21, p. 340.

of die mündige Welt. The two positions cannot be reconciled. It seems to the author of this study that Luther's is the greater wisdom. There is no apologetic in the theology of Barth and Bonhoeffer because both deny an opus alienum Dei.

However, the opus alienum Dei has not ceased. God is not dead! Instead, the contemporary world view interprets what another age spoke of as Anfechtung, the second use of the law, and the cross of the Christian naturalistically. Contemporary men still suffer from Anfechtungen, from "terrified consciences," and the suffering inherent in human life. However, they no longer interpret these anxieties as Anfechtungen, these guilts as created by the law of God, or these sufferings as a part of the cross the Christian bears in discipleship of the Crucified. So that it is quite impossible for contemporary man to see the hand of God operative in these aspects of human life. The hand of God, the "work" of God, to paraphrase a statement of Martin Buber's, is "eclipsed" by the contemporary world view.

The opus alienum Dei continues, even though it is not recognized as such. Contemporary men seem no longer to be the victims of the Biblical "Tyrants:" the flesh, sin, the law, the world, death, etc. Instead they are "tyrannized" by the impersonality of nature, the vastness of the universe, the apparent meaninglessness of human life, the finality of death. Men today must be led to understand the opus alienum Dei as an opus Dei, for where they do not understand it as such, instead of leading to the opus proprium Dei of the gospel, it leads to despair. Luther taught that this is exactly what happens when the opus alienum Dei is not followed by the reception of the gospel. The despair, the vague meaninglessness, so widespread

in contemporary literature hardly needs to be documented.

It would seem then that far from applauding the world come of age with Bonhoeffer, the apologists of the Church ought to lead an attack on the contemporary world view to demonstrate its weaknesses and to help man today see the work of God which goes on from day to day, not only through His Word, but also in nature and history. It is the conviction of this author that when they turn to this task, Luther's theology of mortification and the opus alienum Dei will be found capable of lending them powerful support.

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